

W.D. Lighthall: Sometime Confederation Poet, Sometime Urban Reformer

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### *Abstract*

What follows is not the biography of William Douw Lighthall, 1857-1954, but a chapter in the larger tradition of Canadian intellectual history. Lighthall remained a staunch imperialist, believing that Canada's future would find its fullest expression within the British Empire, and an adamant idealist, asserting the primacy of individual responsibility and community rights. Together these two strains of thought, imperialism and idealism, formed the leitmotif of Lighthall's career: as a poet, novelist and anthologist Lighthall never questioned society's values and mores, he stressed them; similarly, as an urban reformer he underestimated the power of organized capital and, in the end, advocated repressive reforms. Although he was neither a particularly good writer nor a particularly effective reformer, Lighthall nonetheless preached a socialist vision of society—organic, collective, as something independent of the individuals who happened to live there.

### *Résumé*

Ce mémoire n'est pas la biographie du William Douw Lighthall, 1857-1954, mais un chapitre dans la tradition plus large de l'histoire intellectuelle du Canada. Lighthall a demeuré un impérialiste dévoué et un idéaliste intransigeant, croyant que le Canada trouverait son destin au sein de l'empire britannique et affirmant l'importance des responsabilités individuelles et des droits communautaires. Ensemble, l'impérialisme et l'idéalisme ont composé le leitmotif de sa carrière. Comme poète, romancier et anthologiste, il n'a jamais questionné les valeurs de sa société, il les a accentués. Et, comme réformiste urbain, il n'a jamais compris le pouvoir du capital organisé; à la fin, il a recommandé les réformes répressives. Bien qu'il fut ni bon écrivain ni réformiste efficace, Lighthall, en a pas moins, a parlé d'une vision socialiste de la société: organique et collective.

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Bibliography

### *Introduction*

Controversy was never far from Oscar Wilde's 1882 speaking tour of Canada and the United States: his very nature seemed to invite it. Indeed, after hearing Wilde speak at Queen's Hall in Montreal one young man wrote a letter to the editor of the *Witness* to express his righteous indignation. Not only was Wilde an outrageous individual, complained William Douw Lighthall, ("his effeminate costume and his languid sensuality...his irreverent, satirical eye for the absurdities of the middle class were not endearing."<sup>1</sup>) but he had also plagiarized the ideas of the well known British thinker, John Ruskin. Although close in age, Lighthall was twenty-five and Wilde was twenty-eight, they were light years apart in nearly every other respect. Wilde's decadent, flagrant, ostentatious character must have been a shock to Lighthall's stern Victorian sensibilities, to his reserve, discipline and profound sense of duty. I do not want to suggest that this event was some great turning point in Lighthall's life. It was not. In fact I am quite sure that he gave it very little second thought, nonetheless his immediate opposition to Wilde bespeaks his life in general: as a philosopher, philanthropist, poet, patriot, politician, and novelist Lighthall embodied the sentiment of peace, order and good government; in a word, he embodied duty. "Patriotism is nothing else than duty," he once wrote, "our duty to faithfully advance the true interests, the fair rights, and the happiness of each of our brother-citizens, and the whole of them united as the national organism."<sup>2</sup> And from his birth in 1857 to his death a full ninety-six years later, in 1954, Lighthall was nothing less than committed to fulfilling his patriotic duty.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin O'Brien, *Oscar Wilde in Canada*, (Toronto: Personal Library, 1982) p 143

<sup>2</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Canada, a modern nation*, (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1904) p. 11

Born in Hamilton, Lighthall spent his entire life in Montreal where he enjoyed a life of privilege, connection and excellent education, attending the High School of Montreal and then McGill University. After graduating in 1879 with an Honours degree in English literature and history, the Shakespeare Gold Medal and the Dufferin Prize for best historical essay, Lighthall did what young men of his class were supposed to do: he "did the grand tour of Europe," travelling through Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and Italy. Yet he anxiously awaited his return home. Inspired by the Canada First Movement he thought of Europe as the old world—the future belonged to Canada. Much later in his life, in 1910, Lighthall would describe Canada as "this vast new Europe."<sup>3</sup> But it is in two letters that Lighthall received while in Europe from a friend at university, Phillip Ross, that we catch a glimpse of his emerging patriotism, his sense of duty. On June 15, 1879 Ross wrote, "You talk of being more and more in love with Canda."<sup>4</sup> And in a second letter dated July 21 he wrote, "So you and I are to build Canada? The Labours will be Aegean and you alone shall be Hercules. I am as much a Briton as I am a Canadian and I shall not sacrifice myself for any province—London is my goal!"<sup>5</sup> Written in 1879, Ross' words proved prophetic: the building of Canada would indeed be akin to the twelve labours of Hercules and yet with remarkable resolve Lighthall dutifully dedicated himself to the task. He refused to view Canada as a province, as anything but an emerging nation.

Upon his return from Europe Lighthall entered law school at McGill, graduating in 1881. He quickly rose through the ranks of Montreal's legal community earning the

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<sup>3</sup> C.M. Whyte-Edgar, ed., *A Wreath of Canadian Song*, introduction by W.D. Lighthall, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1910) p. x

<sup>4</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, McGill University, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Container 3, File 2

<sup>5</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 3/2

reputation of a brilliant and bilingual barrister. His father, William Francis Lighthall, a well known Montreal notary, had insisted that his sons learn French: it was required for men of their position and prestige.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Lighthall often said that he never knew what language he would have to use in court until he actually arrived. In 1906 he was called to the King's Council: "Grandpa, as soon as he saw [you had been made a KC] began yelling and shouting so loud that we thought you were mixed up in the train accident," his daughter Kylie wrote.<sup>7</sup> Lighthall's career as lawyer offered him automatic membership into the small but immensely influential club of Montreal's élite; it guaranteed connections, opportunities and friends in high places. His career as a lawyer also afforded him the financial security necessary to his pursuits of philosophy, literature, history and politics.

Lighthall was ubiquitous: there was not an issue, debate, event or organization with which he was not in some way affiliated. His name appears on just about every membership list of just about every association in the country: from the established Royal Society of Canada to the obscure Montreal Committee in Support of Spanish Democracy. Indeed, Lighthall was not only a member but invariably he sat on the executive: he served as President of the R.S.C. in 1917-18 and of the Canadian Authors' Association in 1929-30; during the war he founded the Great War Veteran's Association, forerunner to the Royal Canadian Legion. His interests wandered from the mainstream, Canada and the Empire, to the marginal, the origins of the Mayan civilization. He debated municipal reform with H.B. Ames and he discussed the social gospel movement with Salem Bland; he wrote innumerable letters to the editor

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<sup>6</sup> For a description of Lighthall's genealogy, his parents and grand-parents, see Richard Virr, "Son of the Great Dominion. W.D. Lighthall and the Lighthall Family Papers," *Fontanus*, vol II, 1989

<sup>7</sup> July 2, 1906. *Lighthall Papers*, 4/1

including the editor of the *South African Telegraph* urging South Africans to respect the Boers and the editor of the *London Times* on the naval question. He collected art (his collection contained work by Cornelius Krieghoff and a sizeable number of Polynesian masks) and he wrote both poetry and fiction (during his life he published three volumes of poetry, three novels and one anthology). Lighthall was an avid amateur historian and antiquarian: he wrote numerous essays, was a founding member of the Chateau Ramezay Museum and the Canadian Landmarks Association and he assisted David Ross McCord in transforming his private collection into the McCord Museum of Canadian History. He was also an archaeologist—in the 1890s he unearthed a Native burial ground at what was Hochelaga and in 1909 he was appointed chair of Indian Archaeology at the Montreal Society of the Archaeological Institute of America. Also in 1909 the Native people of Caughnawaga made Lighthall an honorary chief with the name "Teikeroken;" tremendously touched by the ceremony Lighthall wrote to the Council, "I consider myself henceforth your brother in blood."<sup>8</sup> Politics was yet another passion of Lighthall's: he wrote scores of letters to Prime Ministers, Ministers and Premiers; he himself was a Westmount City Councillor before becoming Mayor in 1900; he founded the Union of Canadian Municipalities; he was a member of the City Improvement League and of the Metropolitan Parks Commission of Montreal.

Although Lighthall led a seemingly disparate and eclectic life he in point of fact led a very unified and cohesive life. A fierce nationalist Lighthall was at all times an enthusiastic imperialist and an uncompromising idealist. As an imperialist Lighthall venerated the British Empire and believed that Canada's cultural, economic and political future would be guaranteed within the Empire: 'Be masters in your own house,' the imperialists argued, 'but let that house be the British Empire.' And as an

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<sup>8</sup> July 8, 1909 *Lighthall Papers* 4/4



idealist he stressed individual responsibility and obligation at a time when Canada's rapid transformation from a rural, agrarian society to a modern, urban and industrial society fostered avarice, greed and materialism and threatened the break-down of social order. Herein lies the subject of this thesis, not a biography of Lighthall, but a chapter of Canadian intellectual history using the methodology of biography, "by studying those individuals most prominent in the debate."<sup>9</sup>

## II

In his 1946 presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association Frank Underhill argued that Canadian historiography was essentially economic—"a ghostly ballet of bloodless economic categories"—and he called for "a new history writing which will attempt to explain the ideas in the heads of Canadians that caused them to act as they did, their philosophy, why they thought in one way at one period and in a different way at another period."<sup>10</sup> But it was not until the 1960s, when there was a veritable explosion in the number of Canadian history professors and graduate students, that intellectual history became a recognized and important sub-discipline of English Canadian history.

The writing of intellectual history is often described—by the hackneyed phrase—as nailing jelly to the wall and, in the English Canadian, case that jelly has been consensual values and that wall has been national consensus, national identity. In a 1989 article titled "What Happened to Canadian Intellectual History?" Clarence Karr maintains that "At a time when much of Canadian history is focusing positively on the regional and the particular, Canadian intellectual historians continue to emphasize a

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<sup>9</sup> Clarence Karr, "What Happened to Canadian Intellectual History?," *Acadiensis*, XVIII, 2 (Spring 1989), p.160

<sup>10</sup> Frank Underhill, "Some reflections on the Liberal Tradition in Canada," in *In Search of Canadian Liberalism*, (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1960) p 20

whiggish, centralist search for a national identity."<sup>11</sup> Towards this end, the search for a national identity, English Canadian historians have mined three themes: French-English relations, Canadian-American relations and the colonial relationship with Great Britain. And, as Doug Owsram points out, even if the focus is not one of these themes but is rather an idea, say the impact of evolution on Canadian thought, there has been a consistent tendency for the historian to imagine a central Canadian speaking for all of Canada, that all Canadians must somehow think like central Canadians.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps Ramsay Cook best captured the nature of intellectual history in Canada when he wrote,

Every generation of Canadian nationalist intellectuals seems to play the part of Sisyphus. Their permanent task is to push the millstone of Canadian nationalism up a steep mountain, only to find that it rolls back down again to await the labour of the next generation. This means that much of Canadian intellectual history sounds like a broken record.<sup>13</sup>

I, however, do not intend to play the part of Sisyphus. Although my study of Lighthall will look at the French-English relationship, the Canadian-American relationship and the colonial relationship with Great Britain and although Lighthall was a central Canadian, I am not looking for national myths, or a national identity. I have no nationalist axe to grind. If I must nail jelly to the wall then my jelly will be Lighthall's national expression but my wall will be, at once, contempt for nationalism (nationalism is definition and definition is exclusion) and the belief that within Lighthall's nationalism there is something worth preserving, his conception of a collective society, a society different from the United States.

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<sup>11</sup> Clarence Karr, "What Happened to Canadian Intellectual History?," p.160

<sup>12</sup> Doug Owsram, "Intellectual History in the Land of Limited Identities," *Revue d'études canadiennes/Journal of Canadian Studies* vol 24, no 3 (Automne 1989 Fall) p.120

<sup>13</sup> Ramsay Cook, "A nationalist intellectual behind every maple tree," *Saturday Night* (April, 1970), p 19

Lighthall's nationalism—imperialism and idealism—represents what Northrop Frye termed the English Canadian "myth of concern." As a culture develops, Frye argued, "its mythology tends to become encyclopaedic, expanding into a total myth covering a society's view of its past, present and future, its relations to its gods and its neighbours, its traditions, its social and religious duties, and its ultimate destiny."<sup>14</sup> The dominant culture, therefore, excludes, marginalizes and keeps on the periphery that which does not fit. Take Quebec, for example. Although Lighthall lived in Montreal and spoke French and although he was well read in both Quebec's history and literature he never really understood Quebec: his nationalism could not accommodate anything non-British. I am avoiding nuance—Lighthall admired Quebec's social order and he supported French language rights in Ontario—but he never recognized how repugnant his nationalism was to Quebec. Rather, he preferred to believe that Quebec would eventually come to its senses and accept the glorious British Empire as their Empire. As World War I and the possibility of conscription approached Lighthall revealed his profound ignorance of Quebec when he stated, "From what I know of the French Canadians I am convinced that their general opinion is in the same sense that of their British fellow citizens."<sup>15</sup>

In chapter one I examine Lighthall's imperialism and idealism: his undying admiration of things British, his zealous and jingoistic support for the Boer War, his belief in desirable, meaning white, immigration, his quest for a unifying history and his commitment to a society based on duty, obligation and responsibility. Against the backdrop of chapter one chapters two and three are more specific studies on more specific periods of Lighthall's life. Chapter two focuses on Lighthall the writer.

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<sup>14</sup> Northrop Frye, *The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism* (Bloomington, 1973) p. 36

<sup>15</sup> June 15, 1912, *Montreal Herald*.

Despite his poetry, novels and anthology he was never an artist: he was a nationalist who happened to write verse. Through literature he hoped to foster and encourage the myth of concern. To this end, he celebrated Canadian history, he glorified the Empire and he looked forward to an ultimate destiny, the union of humanity. In a letter to his then fiancée, Cybel Wilkes, Lighthall commented on his current project, the anthology, *Songs of the Great Dominion*: "The whole is a collection of Canadian verse arranged so as to show the life and characteristic romance of the country...I believe it will do the country a great deal of good."<sup>16</sup> Clearly the anthology was not an artistic project as much as it was a patriotic project. And by the turn of the century patriotism compelled Lighthall to take up the cause of urban reform. Chapter three traces his emerging anxiety—urbanization, industrialization and immigration were irrevocably transforming Canada—and the solutions he advocated as Mayor of Westmount and founder of the Union of Canadian Municipalities. Because his imperial and idealistic constitution would not permit him to see that capitalism was to blame, he, in the end, advocated repressive, élitist and exclusionary solutions: reform in order to preserve.

I realize that there will be many critics: the last thing we need is another study of a rich, white man. Perhaps. And if I endure the wrath of social historians, feminist historians and working class historians then so be it. But in my defence I want to state that if nothing else I hope this thesis will offer insight into the oppressive nature of Lighthall's nationalism, how it determined the past, the present and the future, how it allowed so little room for question, how it demanded obedience and how it reinforced the rich, white, male Anglo-Canadian. "In this sense," writes Ramsay Cook, "we have had had too much nationalism, not too little, in Canada."<sup>17</sup> But behind Lighthall's

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<sup>16</sup> March 23, 1889. *Lighthall Papers*, 23/4

<sup>17</sup> Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977) p. 7

nationalism lay a socialist vision of society, based on collective rights and individual responsibility. It was a vision which combined "the corporate-organic-collectivist ideas of toryism with the rationalist-egalitarian ideas of liberalism."<sup>18</sup> And it is a vision which remains an important part of the Canadian intellectual tradition.

One final word: always remember that this is a work of history. As much as I may claim it to be true, it is not. I have selected, ordered and arranged the facts to suit my thesis. I have left out facts and I have made inferences where I could not find facts. In a word, I have manipulated. Such is the nature of the beast: history is what convinces.

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<sup>18</sup> Gad Horowitz, "Conservatism, Liberalism and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation," in Hugh G. Thorburn, ed., *Party Politics in Canada*, (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1972) p. 79

*Chapter I*

*Lighthall's Nationalism*

To say that Lighthall took imperialism seriously would be a fantastic understatement. It constituted his very being. And at times not even Britain stood as steadfast and dedicated to the Empire and its responsibilities. In an 1895 poem titled, rather pointedly, "A Protest," he castigates the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, "for not aiding the Armenians during the massacres of Sultan Abdul the Damned," and he scoffed when "the Might of England was limited to a naval demonstration!"<sup>1</sup>

ENGLAND, if thou must set, go down in strength!  
 If thou, as rivals say, must soon decline,  
 Let it be with thy great unbroken line  
 Of champions of the weak!

And in this case the Armenians were clearly the weak and in need of England's protection. It was a question of duty. The British Empire meant nothing, after all, if expediency determined its course of action. Lighthall was an idealist as much as he was an imperialist: duty was duty and there could be no ifs, ands or buts. He was neither a lone crack-pot, marginalized and living on the perimeter of society; nor was he a particularly outspoken and jingoistic supporter of the Empire. Rather, he was representative of late nineteenth, early twentieth century affluent English Canada.

"In the beginning was the word...and the word was God." Likewise in late nineteenth and early twentieth century affluent English Canada there was the discourse and the discourse was imperialism. Imperialism did not mean the scramble for Africa nor did it represent the final stage of capitalism. Rather it meant an aggressive commitment to Canada within the British Empire. So pervasive, persuasive and protean was imperialism that it shaped affluent English Canada's perception of

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<sup>1</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Old Measures: Collected Verse*, (Montreal: A.T. Chapman, 1922) p. 51

history— loyal, heroic, romantic and full of great military campaigns; it intimately inhered in their attitude towards the United States, French Canada and their own sense of racial superiority and ultimately it supplied their vision of the future, an independent Canada and the union of humanity. How the imperialists intended to reconcile the independence of Canada to the union of humanity remained an unresolved paradox. Yet this paradox is tremendously important to any understanding of the imperialist discourse: it reveals imperialism's less tangible and more ephemeral current: idealism. Although imperialism contained a very real agenda— an agenda Lighthall listed as "Imperial Defence (Military and Naval), Emigration, Naturalization, Double Income Tax...Imperial Court of Appeal, Preferential Trade, Imperial Cables, Wireless Telegraphy [and the] Newfoundland Fisheries"— it was also imbued with the highly moralistic overtones of idealism: "Our fundamental justification of the Empire, and consequently one of the chief implied principles of its constitution," Lighthall wrote, "is that its bond is mutual obligation."<sup>2</sup> Since the Anglo-Saxon race was predisposed to moral superiority the British Empire was necessarily a moral community of individuals bound together by their shared commitment to the greater good, by their shared revulsion to materialism. Imperialism, then, was the means to an end, the ideal community. "The Empire was really a state of mind, an ethical concept," Terry Cook argues. "Tariffs, naval power, and telegraph links only had meaning because they institutionalized and protected an agreeable social ideal."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The New Constitution of the Empire," *Montreal Herald*, July 9, 1907. *Lighthall Papers*, 12/14

<sup>3</sup> Terry Cook, "George R. Parkin and the Concept of Britannic Idealism," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Révue d'études canadiennes*, vol. x, no. 3, (August 1975 août) p. 26

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"Nationalism and Imperialism," Lighthall once wrote, "are but two concentric circles of the same wheel."<sup>4</sup> Yet, despite the assertions of men and women like Lighthall, Canadian historians prior to the late sixties had interpreted the imperialist movement as an anomaly in Canada's national development. The Whig or colony to nation interpretation of Canadian history maintains the existence of a "linear decay...of the Empire tie as a consequence of pressure from a steadily growing 'nationalism'...The struggle by Canadians to rid themselves of imperial overlords began almost simultaneously with the settler's first breath of free northern air and continued unceasingly until the last imperial shackle was struck off."<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, imperialism was at best an aberration in the evolution of Canadian nationalism and at worst a heavy handed imposition from an overbearing Colonial Office. In 1970, however, Carl Berger published his more than important study, *The Sense of Power*, in which he argues that imperialism and nationalism were not antithetical but complementary.<sup>6</sup> His first sentence reads, "This is a book in Canadian nationalist thought."<sup>7</sup>

In the years after Confederation there was a very conscious effort by Canadian intellectuals to construct, to use their phrase, a "new nationality" out of that vast

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<sup>4</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Governance of Empire," 1910. *Lighthall Papers*, 17/19 p. 5

<sup>5</sup> Jack Schultz, "Canadian Attitudes Toward the Empire, 1919-1939," (Dalhousie University: Unpublished Ph.D., 1975) p. 2

<sup>6</sup> In August of 1970 Robert J.D. Page wrote, "The recent publication of Carl Berger's *The Sense of Power* was an event of the first magnitude in Canadian studies." (See Robert J.D. Page, "Carl Berger and the intellectual origins of Canadian imperialist thought, 1867-1914," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Révue d'études canadiennes*, vol. 5, no. 3, August 1970 août, p. 39.) Although Berger's thesis is over twenty years old and although it has come under criticism it nonetheless remains an important work in Canadian historiography. (See Graham Carr, "Imperialism and Nationalism in Revisionist Historiography: A Critique of Some Recent Trends," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Révue d'études canadiennes*, vol. 17, no. 2, été 1982 Summer.)

<sup>7</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power, studies in the ideas of Canadian imperialism, 1867-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) p. 3



territory known as Canada, to provide a sense of what it meant to be Canadian, to foster loyalty to Canadian institutions and commitment to a Canadian future. And in 1868 a small group of men gathered in Ottawa. Calling themselves Canada First they sought to define and encourage a new nationality, one which would seek greater Canadian autonomy yet not deny the British connection: they wrote essays, they gave lectures, they published a newspaper, called *The Nation*, and in 1873 they entered politics as a third party.<sup>8</sup> Although the Canada First movement was very short lived, (it did not see the end of the 1870s,) its program, its aspirations and its vision found renewed expression in the imperialist movement of the 1880s.

Canadians confronted a bleak future in the 1880s. Indeed, many questioned the very survival of a separate British entity in North America. "A self-seeking race of unscrupulous demagogues and rabid news-writers," Lighthall wrote in 1885, "have taken up the natural differences of character and opinion that exist in our midst and insincere apologies and "explanations" can no longer conceal that a crisis is apparently approaching which all must regret."<sup>9</sup> The execution of Louis Riel, (a hero to Quebec, a subversive to the rest of Canada), the election of Honoré Mercier, (a staunch Quebec nationalist), the Jesuit Estates Act, (a controversial bill to restore former Jesuit holdings), and the birth of the Equal Rights Association (an English and Protestant rights group that feared papal interference in Dominion affairs<sup>10</sup>) threatened the already tenuous French-English, Catholic-Protestant relationship. Slow economic growth was the rule of the day as the National Policy failed to generate prosperity. And as always the spectre of annexation loomed on the horizon. It seemed the only

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<sup>8</sup> See David P. Gagan, "The relevance of "Canada First", *Journal of Canadian Studies/Révue d'études canadiennes*, vol 5, no. 4, novembre 1970 November

<sup>9</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Montreal Daily Star*, Oct. 17, 1885, *Lighthall Papers*, 12/2

<sup>10</sup> See J.R. Miller, *Equal Rights: The Jesuits' Estates Act Controversy*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1979)

forces holding the historically disparate, economically desperate and culturally different provinces together were a thin line of steel and a piece of paper called the BNA Act. Goldwin Smith captured the mood of the nation when he dared to ask the Canadian question: "Whether the four blocks of territory constituting the Dominion can for ever [sic] be kept by political agencies united among themselves and separate from their Continent."<sup>11</sup>

Into this vacuum of identity, this period of uncertainty, rushed the discourse of imperialism. With a vengeance: "As Canada approached the twentieth century there was no single topic which moved Canadians as powerfully and emotionally as "The Empire."<sup>12</sup> The year 1884 marked the formal arrival of imperialism in Canada when the Imperial Federation League, later the British Empire League, opened its first chapter in Montreal. In October of 1892 Lighthall founded the Canadian National League in order "To disseminate a reasonable patriotism based on our position as an organized people...to disseminate clear ideals of the importance to each citizen of his citizenship, its rights and duties especially among the young to advance national unity."<sup>13</sup> Each February the League was to assemble for a celebration and concert while "some eminent orator would discuss some patriotic theme."<sup>14</sup> On February 17, 1893 George Munro Grant offered the first oration of eminence. Although the Canadian National

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<sup>11</sup> Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canada Question*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1891 1971) p. 5

<sup>12</sup> Robert J.D. Page, "Canada and the imperial idea in the Boer War years," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Révue d'études canadiennes*, vol. 5, no 2, (February 1970 février) p. 33. It was this sort of enthusiasm which Graham Carr sought to temper in his critique of imperialism in Canadian historiography. He noted that although many English Canadians profoundly believed in imperialism he also argued that historians would be wise to "remember that people living in Saint John and Vancouver may not have shared the world view of Torontonians." "Imperialism and Nationalism in Revisionist Historiography: A Critique of Some Recent Trends," p. 96

<sup>13</sup> Oct. 21, 1892 PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol 1, file 3

<sup>14</sup> R.S. Somerville, "Canadian Celebrities, Mr W.D Lighthall," *The Canadian Magazine*, vol. xxvi, no. 6, April 1906, pp. 552-553

League itself was short-lived Lighthall later insisted that "The annual entertainments have been kept up uninterrupted till the present ...under the name of the Empire Day Concert and became the first celebrations of Empire Day being readily amalgamated with [the] idea."<sup>15</sup> That occurred in 1899 when a group of men and women launched what would become an institution in English Canadian schools: May 23, the day before Queen Victoria's birthday, was to be known as Empire Day, a day for school children to celebrate the empire with pictures, plays, parades and poetry.<sup>16</sup> And in 1900 a group of English women in Montreal founded the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire in order to "stimulate, and give expression to the sentiment of patriotism which bonds the women of the Empire around the Throne and Person of their Gracious and Beloved Sovereign."<sup>17</sup> While it is true that groups like Lighthall's Canadian National League, the British Empire League and the IODE never attracted large memberships, imperialism soon became a movement with considerable political clout. "Successful politicians like Sir Wilfrid Laurier were never so unwise, at least until 1911, as to underestimate the strength of imperialism in English Canada."<sup>18</sup> Imperialism replaced doubt with certainty, it countered the sense of drift with a sense of mission, it offered identity and it promised destiny. Imperialism was more than a discourse, it was a way of life, it was, to quote Andrew Macphail, a then prominent professor, intellectual and imperialist, "a way of looking at things, a frame of mind, an affair of the spirit."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Dec. 1907, *Lighthall Papers*, 4/2

<sup>16</sup> See Robert M. Stamp, "Empire Day in the Schools of Ontario: The Training of Young Imperialists," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*, vol. 8, no 3 (août 1973 August)

<sup>17</sup> From the first IODE statement. Montreal, Feb 1900. *Lighthall Papers*, 24/13

<sup>18</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 5

<sup>19</sup> Quote in S.E.D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal*, (Toronto. University of Toronto Press, 1976) p. 35

Looking for self-definition, a national identity, imperialists, like Canadian Firsters before them, turned to their race and to their climate. "That spirit of Anglo-Saxon superiority and mission, celebrated wherever members of that "race" lived, naturally influenced English Canadians," write Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown. "It made them part of a great enterprise."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, race consciousness formed a large part of their identity: Anglo-Saxons were stronger and more civilized; they were inclined to high morality, self-government, freedom and liberty. The Anglo-Saxon race, after all, was a northern race and northern races are necessarily superior to southern races. Celebrating Canada's Anglo-Saxon tradition had the obvious potential of alienating French Canadians yet imperialists were quick to point out that the Anglo-Saxon and the French races were descendents of the same Nordic invaders and, furthermore, both English and French Canadians were being moulded by the same tough but invigorating Canadian climate. The north quickly became a leitmotif in descriptions of the Canadian character. Robert Grant Haliburton, an associate of the Canada First movement, articulated the first coherent statement on the relationship between Canadians and the Canadian climate. Lamenting the lack of a national spirit he asked in 1869, "Can the generous flame of a national spirit be kindled and blaze in the icy bosom of the frozen north?" and he answered unequivocally, yes. The Canadian character "must ever be that it is a Northern country inhabited by descendents of northern races." With logic typical of such crude racial theorizing he demanded, "if climate has not had the effect of moulding races how is it that southern nations have almost invariably been inferior to and subjugated by the men of the north."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown, *Canada 1896-1921, A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) p. 27

<sup>21</sup>Quote in Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," in J.H. Bumsted, ed., *Interpreting Canada's Past, vol. II*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986) pp. 159-160.

(Ironically, health problems forced Haliburton to spend the winter in a warmer climate after 1881.) Carl Berger writes that before long a "lengthy catalogue of desirable national attributes was compiled:" physical, mental and moral fitness, the capacity for self-government, chaste and proper behavior.<sup>22</sup> George Parkin, Principal of Upper Canada College and prominent imperialist, claimed that Canada's climate "drives men back on home life and on work; it teaches foresight, it cures or kills the shiftless and improvident;" furthermore, it nourishes "a Puritan turn of mind which gives moral strenuousness."<sup>23</sup>

Lighthall too celebrated the Anglo-Saxon race and Canada's northerness. He once argued that the Empire derived its greatness from "the common heritage of the Imperial Race," "the white stocks of the Empire."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Canada's Anglo-Saxon tradition had to be protected through "desirable immigration,"<sup>25</sup> read white immigration. Lighthall insisted that British immigrants, even the poor and the "physically weak," be allowed to enter the country. "It is what Christianity teaches."<sup>26</sup> But in a "Private and Confidential" letter to Robert Borden, Lighthall argued that Sikhs ought to be prohibited from entering the country, that British Columbia's foundations ought to be "laid in people of original British stock."<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, again like his cohorts in the imperialist movement, Lighthall insisted that French and English Canadians shared both a common racial and linguistic background:

Nous n'oublions pas que les deux races sont liées intimement. Nous descendons du même peuple. Longtemps après l'époque de César, nous

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<sup>22</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 129

<sup>23</sup> George Parkin, *The Great Dominion: Studies of Canada*, (London: MacMillan and Company, 1895) p 213

<sup>24</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Governance of Empire," p 2

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> May 5, 1908. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 1, file 19.

<sup>27</sup> Jan. 13, 1912. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 1, file 24.

n'etions q'une seule race. Jusqu'à cinq cents ans passés, le français était— pour employer un paradoxe— la principale langue anglaise, et le résultat est aujourd'hui l'anglais écrit est une langue latine.<sup>28</sup>

The imperialist equation was simple: north equalled superiority, south equalled inferiority— (Lighthall maintained, for example, that Canada's geographic position was superior to that of Brazil, "that hot land," as tropical regions were unable to support "white populations." Similarly, South Africa remained a "black man's land by twelve to one."<sup>29</sup>)— and French and English Canadians were northern races.

While race and climate formed a large part of the imperialist definition of the Canadian character so too did Canadian history. History, after all, is essential to any nationalism. It provides origins, a beginning, the necessary myths, and like any nationalism imperialism demanded the founding myths great nations are made of. Myths insure solidarity, they provide stability and meaning, they combat centrifugal forces by reinforcing shared experiences: "the purpose of myth," Claude Lévi-Strauss argued, "is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a real contradiction."<sup>30</sup> And if nothing else Canada was a country of real contradiction: the French and the English living together next to the United States. The decades after Confederation, then, "witnessed a substantial increase in the number of [historical] works published, the growth of a romantic, retrospective attitude to the past, and a multiplication of local historical societies."<sup>31</sup> As usual Lighthall was never far from the thick of things: he wrote essays, he gave lectures, and he was a founding member

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<sup>28</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Un document à conserver, texte d'un beau discours de M. W.D. Lighthall, à propos de Dollard." *Le Devoir*, le 6 juin, 1911.

<sup>29</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Canada, a modern nation*, (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1904) p. 20

<sup>30</sup> Quote in Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 4

<sup>31</sup> Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) p. 2

of several historical societies such as the Chateau Ramezay Historical Museum and the Canadian Landmarks Association.

Imperialist history contained three recurring themes: romance, national unity and progress. History was not the dispassionate search for the objective truth, history was romantic, full of marvelous drama and bravery, it was about the French and the English together overcoming tremendous odds, it was the story of success. These men did not ignore, cover-up or white-wash failure, tragedy or crime. They simply did not see it. Failure had no place in the quest for national myths. Lighthall's 1889 essay, "An Account of the Battle of Chateauguay" is particularly revealing. Imperialists took the War of 1812 very seriously, as some sort of trial of nationhood. David Ross McCord, "ardent imperialist"<sup>32</sup> and founder of the McCord National Museum, called it Canada's war of independence while Lighthall called it not only a turning point in Canadian history but "an epoch in man's history." The War of 1812 pitted the United States— "a mean and braggert spirit," a nation containing "all the contemptible elements, all the boasters"— against the "glorious" Canadian and British forces, at a time when Britain was involved in "the struggle for the liberties of Europe against the designs of Napoleon."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the War of 1812 and the Battle of Chateauguay in particular, witnessed the French and English standing shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy. Thus, with tremendous pomp and circumstance Lighthall celebrated the contributions and leadership of de Salaberry, calling him nothing less than "a perfect type of the old French-Canadian military gentry."<sup>34</sup> The Battle of

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<sup>32</sup> C.A. Maunsell and E.P. Hatham, *The Family of Maunsell*, vol II, part II, (London Kegan, Past, Trench and Co., 1920) p. 621

<sup>33</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "An Account of the Battle of Chateauguay," (Montreal. Wm Drysdale and Co., 1889) p. 5

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10

Chateauguay was heroic proof of national unity.<sup>35</sup> "The meaning of it all is," Lighthall concluded,

that given a good cause, and the defence of our homes against wanton aggression, we can dare the odds that would otherwise seem hopeless; that it is in the future, as in the past, the spirits of men, and not their material resources, which count for success; our country can never be conquered; and that we shall always be able to preserve ourselves free in our course development towards our own idea of a nation.<sup>36</sup>

Simply, the Battle of Chateauguay was a battle of mythic proportions, was the stuff myths are made of

If Lighthall sought a history steeped in romance and unity he also sought a history that revealed Canada's inevitable and unrelenting progress. Carl Berger writes,

imperialists contended that the history of the Dominion was essentially the story of material progress and the steady advance of liberty and self-government. For them, all Canadian history was ceaselessly moving toward one irrefragable conclusion— the acquisition of full national rights and freedom within an imperial federation.<sup>37</sup>

In an essay titled, "The Glorious Enterprise, the conquest of New France," Lighthall announced with the subtlety of a sledge-hammer that "The greatest event in the history of the New World, (except its discovery by Columbus) in the opinion of this writer, was the conquest of Canada, for that event decided the fate of North America, as respects the dominance of races and institutions."<sup>38</sup> Although the conquest was, and

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<sup>35</sup> The theme of national unity was tremendously important to the imperialist conception of history. David Ross McCord offered perhaps the most succinct statement of national unity when he wrote to Lady Laurier in 1919. "Le musée que je ferai n'est pas un musée McGill, ni un musée protestant, et certainement pas un musée anglais. Chaque objet dans le musée sera désigné et exprimé dans les deux langues et j'enseigne les principes auxquels votre associé marital dans ce monde a dédié sa vie— l'union des deux races. Musée McCord D'Histoire Canadienne. *McCord Family Papers*, file 5245, le 4 Nov, 1919.

<sup>36</sup> W D Lighthall, "An Account of the Battle of Chateauguay," p. 28

<sup>37</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 109

<sup>38</sup> W D Lighthall, "The Glorious Enterprise, the conquest of New France," (Montreal: C.A. Marchand, n.d.) p. 1



remains still, a more than contentious debate in Canadian history Lighthall and his peers regarded it as a singular event introducing the seeds of things British. Nor did they find this inconsistent with the theme of national unity, things British were simply and self-evidently superior: British institutions, the British constitution and the Anglo-Saxon race. And so began the constant evolution of Canada, "the steady unfolding to power and culture."<sup>39</sup> the purpose of history was to record Canada's material progress, its advancement from a tiny outpost to a nation on the threshold of greatness. "We want no hand's constricting grip, no landmark's bar to really superior progress--- for landmarks themselves are signs of progress," reads the Canadian Landmark's Association statement of purpose.<sup>40</sup>

The Canadian character was defined by race, climate and history and, further, by the belief that Canadians had a destiny different from that of their English speaking neighbours to the south. The imperialist perception of the American constitution as tending towards anarchy and of the American character as essentially violent, immoral and material cast a complementary light on the Canadian constitution and the Canadian character. Imperialists distrusted republicanism and the notion of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as much as they trusted constitutional monarchy and the principle of peace, order and good government. But, as Carl Berger points out, the imperialist critique of the American system of government was, in point of fact, part of a larger critique of the American character. Americans were violent: "The number of murders in England amount to 237 per annum in each ten million," Col. George Denison announced in 1885, "in the United States there are 820, or three

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<sup>39</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, (London Walter Scott, 1889) p.xxiii

<sup>40</sup> The Canadian Landmarks Association. Statement of Purpose. May 15, 1907. *Lighthall Papers*, 17/16

times as many."<sup>41</sup> Americans were immoral: "Divorces are not to be desired," Laurier told the House of Commons. "For my part I would rather belong to this country of Canada where divorces are few than to the neighbouring republic where divorces are many. I think it argues a good moral condition of a country where you have few divorces."<sup>42</sup> And Americans were materialistic: "But much about the people strikes me as material," Lighthall wrote to his fiance in 1889.

Money and show seem to be so high in their aims as they pass along the street or talk in the cars ..It seemed to me as if under the other estimations of things there was an unlying thought running "Pork and money — Pork and money." Chicago is a great centre of the Pork trade...On the whole we [Canadians] are more picturesque and our people seem to do less thoroughly material thinking.<sup>43</sup>

In the end, the imperialists concluded, the United States was an example not to be followed. Indeed, Canada had its own future to fulfill.

Despite the doom and gloom of the 1880s the men of the imperialist movement nonetheless remained optimistic. Lighthall, for example, interpreted the expression of doubt as an expression of nationalism. In an 1888 letter to the editor of the *Montreal Daily Witness* he argued that "doubt and regret are so frequently echoed by others that one might readily think that the absence complained of must be a fact. Is it a fact, however? Is it not true, on the contrary, that each of the people who express such a regret— they generally do so with feeling— is a living instance of the sentiment of nationality." "The truth is," he continued, "there is a vast unorganized force throughout the country scarcely conscious of its strength."<sup>44</sup> Lighthall proved

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<sup>41</sup> Quote in Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 161

<sup>42</sup> Quote in James G. Snell, "The White Life For Two: The Defence of Marriage and Sexual Morality in Canada, 1890-1914," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, vol. xvi no. 31, (Mai 1983 May) p. 114

<sup>43</sup> March 23, 1889. *Lighthall Papers*, 23/4

<sup>44</sup> November 10, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 12/2

correct: by the turn of the century national self-confidence had replaced national self-doubt to the point where Canadians could say that the twentieth century would be theirs. It was a question of destiny— imperialists looked forward to the day when Canada, with a population of 800 to 900 million people, would "be the future centre and dominating portion of the British Empire."<sup>45</sup>— but it was also a question of manhood. In an undated essay Lighthall argued that "Canadian manhood demands that it shall be its own absolute master to work out its own problems."<sup>46</sup>

Lighthall's reference to manhood reveals an understudied aspect of the imperialist discourse: its essential masculinity. "Their nationalism and their imperialism were, however, decidedly masculine affairs," Susan Mann Trofimenkoff argues in a short yet provocative article, "Nationalism, Feminism and Canadian Intellectual History." "Berger's first chapter [in *The Sense of Power* ] is simply and pointedly entitled "Men."<sup>47</sup> Imperialist history was the history of men: "for to hunt, to fight, to hew out a farm one must be a man!" Lighthall exclaimed. "Canadians are, for the most part, the descendants of armies, officers and men, and every generation of them has stood up to battle."<sup>48</sup> Note the obvious absence of women. The future too was the future of men: recall Lighthall's equation— independence equals manhood. Canada making decisions for itself without interference from Britain was the equivalent of men making decisions for themselves without interference from their mother. Thus in

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<sup>45</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Canada, a modern nation*, p. 78

<sup>46</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Independence," n.d., n.p., *Lighthall Papers*, 2/18. Lighthall was not the only one to use the manhood metaphor. Charles G.D. Roberts maintained that Canadians required independence within the British Empire, it was a question of "full political manhood." Quote in Robert J.D. Page, "Canada and the imperial idea in the Boer War years," p. 37 Frederick George Scott, Anglican minister, minor poet and father of F.R. Scott compared the Riel Rebellion of 1885 to a test of manhood for "the youngest of the nations," Canada. "In Memoriam," in W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. 275

<sup>47</sup> Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "Nationalism, Feminism and Canadian Intellectual History," *Canadian Literature*, no.83, (Winter 1979) p. 10

<sup>48</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. xxi

the present we find a most pronounced expression of masculinity: the present must remain true to the (manly) past and work towards a (manly) future.

The Boer War was in part proof of manhood. True, Canadians were fighting for the Empire "but they were also fighting as a demonstration of Canada's new strength and aspirations."<sup>49</sup> The defence of Uitlanders in South Africa was part of the responsibilities of an emerging, independent nation in the Empire, it was an obligation of manhood. And so it was that Canadian imperialists<sup>50</sup> launched a jingoistic war effort complete with patriotic organizations, parades and bad poetry.<sup>51</sup> Lighthall, predictably, supported Canada's war effort in South Africa: peace was always preferable to war but if the Boers failed to see the virtues of the British Empire then they would have to be shown the virtues of the British Empire. As Mayor of Westmount he organized a celebration to honour the men from Westmount who had fought in South Africa. Held in Victoria Hall on April 18, 1901 Lighthall presented each of the men with a gold pendant to "commemorate the people's recognition of their services to Empire."<sup>52</sup> And in 1902, at the end of the war, Lighthall wrote an essay, "To the Boers, a friends appeal from Canada," in which he encouraged the Boers to remain true to the Empire and to follow the Canadian example. "Let me urge on every thinking Boer," he wrote, "with all the emphasis in my power and the experience of a Canadian, in whose country two races work together in harmony, that this alone is the

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<sup>49</sup> Robert J.D. Page, "Canada and the imperial idea in the Boer War years," p. 47

<sup>50</sup> It must be noted that Canadian support for the Boer War was far from unanimous. Certainly French Canada did not support the war but neither did English farmers, radical labour and Protestant clergy. See Carman Miller, "English Canadian Opposition to the South African War as seen through the Press," *Canadian Historical Review*, LV, no. 4, Dec. 1974.

<sup>51</sup> See Rev. J. Dougals Barthwick, *Poems and Songs of the South African War*, (Montreal: Gazette Publishing Co., 1901)

<sup>52</sup> *Register of Council Proceedings. Town of Westmount. Vol. 7, p. 353. Westmount City Hall.*

road to national happiness."<sup>53</sup> Equally enthusiastic and equally jingoistic were English Canadian women. Cybel Lighthall, Lighthall's wife, founded the Westmount Patriotic Association "to show our loyalty to country and Queen."<sup>54</sup> This group of women collected supplies— sweaters, bandages and canned goods— and arranged to have them sent to the Canadian troops in South Africa. And Letitia McCord, wife of David Ross McCord, wrote several poems in support of the war effort. In a February 1900 poem titled "Our First Dead" she achieved pure bathos:

Could we yield aught to our motherhood,  
Offerings more dear than our children's blood?<sup>55</sup>

It was also at this time that the IODE emerged. That women participated in the war effort does not affect the overall interpretation: Canada's rush to join the Boer War was an assertion of independence and independence was the equivalent of manhood. "Is there a man whose bosom did not swell with pride," Laurier asked the House with reference to Canadian action at the Battle of Paardeberg. "The pride of consciousness

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<sup>53</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "To the Boers, a friends appeal from Canada," May 27, 1902, *Lighthall Papers*, 17/14. In 1896 Lighthall wrote a letter to the editor of the *South African Telegraph* in which he made the case that Canada ought to provide a role model for South Africa. "Though naturally an intelligent and apt people, yet being in the mass uneducated and out of the current of the world's ideas, [the French] form the labouring classes of the towns, the backwards farmers in the country, and their deathrate is alarming. At the same time we in Canada have learnt by the mere existence of a different race and religion in our midst greater lessons of political liberality than perhaps anywhere outside the Swiss Republic." ("To the Afrikanders, A Voice from Afar," May 10, 1896, *Lighthall Papers*, 12/8.) Lighthall's letter received two responses: both polite reminders to mind his own business.

<sup>54</sup> March 1900, *Lighthall Papers*, 24/13. As Mayor of Westmount Lighthall and his Council donated 500 dollars to the Westmount Patriotic Association. This appears to be Council's only charitable donation during Lighthall's tenure. *Register of Council Proceedings. Town of Westmount. Westmount City Hall. Feb. 5, 1900. Vol. 7.*

<sup>55</sup> "Our First Dead" is an acrostic: the first letter of the first word in each line together spell, CANADIAN CONTINGENT. John Reade, a prominent Montreal writer and critic, described McCord as a poet "whose harp has many strings but one grand theme:" love of Empire. Rev. J. Douglas Barthwick included ten of McCord's poems in his anthology.

that that day the fact had been revealed to the world that a new power had arisen in the west."<sup>56</sup>

If the Boer War was an effort to assert Canada's manhood then the Alaska boundary dispute was near emasculation. On October 17, 1903 the British representative on the judicial tribunal, Lord Alverstone, voted against the Canadian case thereby awarding two of the four disputed islands to the United States when only five days before he had announced that all four islands should go to Canada. Clearly Alverstone had capitulated to American pressure: Canadian interests had been sacrificed on the altar of Anglo-American relations. Laurier called it "one of those decisions which have made British diplomacy odious to Canadian people." He later suggested that "we should ask the British Parliament for more extensive powers so that if we have to deal with matters of a similar nature again, we shall deal with them in our own way, in our own fashion, according to the best light we have."<sup>57</sup> Lighthall agreed. He argued that the Home Cabinet had handled the affair poorly from the beginning and in the end "brought it to a deplorable bungle." He concluded that "in the future, Canadian treaty matters be carried out by a Canadian personnel, subject to any reasonable safeguards to the Empire." Canadian independence was not "antagonistic to that external sphere of historic mutual loyalty and large alliance for peace, progress and humanity which we delight to call by the name, Our Empire."<sup>58</sup> Canadian manhood was simply part of its natural progress within the British family. In a similar vein Lighthall rebuked "some English public men" for their "certain unwise and intemperate

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<sup>56</sup> Quote in Robert J.D. Page, "Canada and the imperial idea in the Boer War years," p. 47. See also Carman Miller, *Canada and the Boer War*, Ottawa: National Museum of Man, National Film Board of Canada, 1978

<sup>57</sup> Quotes in Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown, *Canada 1896-1921, A Nation Transformed*, p. 48

<sup>58</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Canada, a modern nation*, p. 10

question of Canadian contribution to an Imperial Navy. In his letter to the *London Times* he made it clear that Canada would make its own decision at the appropriate time.<sup>59</sup>

The imperialist movement was a nationalist movement. It supplied a particular conception of history, it supplied a particular vision of the future and it supplied a concrete agenda for the present. But the imperialist movement was also a moral movement. Commitment to the Empire meant commitment to what Lighthall called, "THAT SUBLIME CAUSE, THE UNION OF MANKIND."

WHICH  
THE BRITISH PEOPLES,  
IF THEY ARE TRUE TO THEMSELVES AND COURAGEOUS IN THE  
FUTURE AS THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST,  
WILL TAKE TO BE  
THE REASON OF EXISTENCE OF THEIR EMPIRE.<sup>60</sup>

In other words, the Empire and its civilising mission was a means to an end— the peaceful federation of humanity on earth. "The Empire was one strategy for combatting materialism and deterioration of social bonds," Misao Dean argues. "The Empire was supposed to be held together by ideals that transcended the profit motive and to be motivated by the desire to do good works by bringing the benefits of British civilization to the "lesser breeds without the law."<sup>61</sup> Imperialists believed that the Empire was about higher moral purpose, about self-sacrifice, about obligation to the greater good. Which, of course, is the very stuff of idealism.

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<sup>59</sup> Sept. 24, 1904. *Lighthall Papers*, collected pamphlets

<sup>60</sup> W.D. Lighthall, dedication to *Songs of the Great Dominion*.

<sup>61</sup> Misao Dean, *A Different Point of View: Sara Jeannette Duncan*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1991) p. 16

## II

Idealism first arrived in Canada, insofar as an idea can arrive any where, with John Watson in 1872, new professor of moral philosophy at Queen's University. While at the University of Glasgow Watson had been influenced by the writings of German idealists, most notably Hegel, and by his professor and mentor, the eminent Scottish idealist, Edward Caird. Philosophical idealism was really Christian idealism, it sought to establish the essential reasonableness of Christianity not by challenging evolution but by encompassing it. Canadian intellectuals had for some time been troubled by the failure of Common Sense philosophy, Baconian science and natural theology—the "triumverate of early Victorian orthodoxy"<sup>62</sup> which encouraged Christian piety and discouraged speculation and analysis—to accommodate evolutionary science. The implications of evolution, after all, were devastating: humans were not the deliberate creation of God and survival of the fittest spelled moral relativity. "Watson's speculative idealism, significantly termed a creed in his definition, gave a new conception of design and purpose in the universe, which encompassed evolutionary science," B. Anne Wood writes in her book, *Idealism Transformed*.

It offered a trenchant critique of empiricism and revealed the limitations of the scientific method. It encouraged intellectual inquiry in students while at the same time cultivating a pious disposition in them. Above all, it proclaimed the rationality of the universe and re-interpreted the Christian experience in this more modern direction.<sup>63</sup>

Watson's arrival served as a catalyst as idealism quickly became the dominant moral philosophy in English Canada. A.B. McKillop writes, "The hegemony of idealism had

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<sup>62</sup> A.B. McKillop, "John Watson and the Idealist Legacy," *Canadian Literature* 83, (Winter 1979) p. 73

<sup>63</sup> B. Anne Wood, *Idealism Transformed: The Making of a Progressive Educator*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1985) p. 31



begun."<sup>64</sup> Indeed, Watson and his colleagues at McGill and the University of Toronto influenced an entire generation of students, including Lighthall.

Lighthall's interest in philosophy was life-long: he studied moral philosophy at McGill, he wrote and published several essays, he attended conferences, he belonged to the Montreal Group of the Canadian Philosophical Association and he corresponded with philosophers in Germany, England and the United States. The President of the Aristotelian Society of London, England, for example, wrote to Lighthall congratulating him on one of his first attempts at philosophy, "Analysis of the Altruistic Act." "Your essay," he wrote, "is welcome proof that philosophy in its genuine sense is living and vigorous in other parts of the Western world than the U.S.A."<sup>65</sup> Such high praise notwithstanding, Lighthall was not a particularly original thinker, he was a Christian idealist, but he was a committed thinker. He feared social fragmentation, he distrusted society's blind faith in science, its worship of technology, and he loathed materialism, individualism and moral relativism. He therefore sought "to paint a world picture which would be acceptable to a generation for whom traditional religious belief had often become meaningless...to locate, if you will, a meaning for human life against a very large background."<sup>66</sup> He sought a philosophical base that would provide consistency, that would connect his seemingly disparate actions. Although his writings are often vague and repetitive distillation nonetheless reveals his so-called world picture: the reasonableness of Christianity. "[I]t is imperative in such an

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<sup>64</sup> A.B. McKillop, "John Watson and the Idealist Legacy," p. 74

<sup>65</sup> March 9, 1880. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/2

<sup>66</sup> Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott, *The Faces of Reason: An Essay on Philosophy and Culture in English Canada, 1850-1950*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1981) p. 362

epoch," he wrote, "that Christ's doctrine of uncalculating self-devotion should be proven accordant with proper inductive and analytical studies of them."<sup>67</sup>

Between 1882 and 1887 Lighthall published a series of essays leading up to and including "Sketch of a New Utilitarianism" in which he set down his philosophy, what he termed the New Utilitarianism. He began with the conviction that "there is a drawn battle between Christianity and the pleasure-theory, which must be decided by the life or death question, "Which is true?"<sup>68</sup> Lighthall identified the pleasure theory as Egoism: "Egoism claims," he wrote, "that the standard of good and motive of right for me is my own personal pleasure, or a structure of pleasures composing my happiness."<sup>69</sup> Such hedonism promised nothing less than social chaos if not social collapse. Lighthall, however, did not find consolation in Utilitarianism, that we seek the greatest happiness for the greatest number. "Most advocates of Utilitarianism," he wrote, "while constructing each his more or less valid schedule of objective goods and arguing in his own fashion for their common principle of greatest happiness, pass by the need of a critical view of the motive."<sup>70</sup> Without offering an explanation of motive, of why we ought to seek the greatest happiness for the greatest number, Utilitarianism maintains "its dangerous drift towards Egoism."<sup>71</sup> As it was with Utilitarianism so it was with Immanuel Kant. On the one hand Lighthall found tremendous inspiration in Kant's writings: "A century ago Immanuel Kant, living his quaint but momentous life at Koenigsberg, arrived at a profound theory of ethics...Kant's theory of moral obligation is condensed in his dictum: "Act so that the

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<sup>67</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Ethics, with a theory of the motive," (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1882) p. 5

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13

maxim of thy will might be made a principle of universal legislation."<sup>72</sup> On the other hand Kant's argument suffered from one "fatal illogicality,"<sup>73</sup> the same fatal illogicality as Utilitarianism: why is it that we ought we behave as if our personal maxims were to become universal maxims. In order to find an answer to the dilemma of Utilitarianism and Kant, Lighthall turned to the question of motive, what motivates humans to act morally.

To begin, Lighthall resisted the reductionism of a purely scientific explanation of motive, that we are the sum total of millions of nerve endings, that we merely register and respond to external stimuli. He recognized the body's "mechanical nature, in the lever-action of its bone-and muscle adjustments, the chemical operation of the digestive juices, the voltaic-battery structure of the brain, the similarity of nervous currents to electrical, and the whole family of facts which show us that the body is simply an elaborate machine. But," he insisted, "surely there are some differences between [the human body] and an ordinary machine."<sup>74</sup> We are different because we have a mind, we have consciousness, we can reason: "We live in our consciousness, and not in our unconsciousness."<sup>75</sup> Moreover and more importantly, we live in a society. Lighthall's, indeed the idealist, conception of society is critical: society was something organic, it was an organism, the individual and the community were inseparable. At one point Lighthall likened us to leaves on a tree. And in a poem titled "Our Underlying Existence" he outlines his underlying connection to humanity, in this case a fool.

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<sup>72</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Spiritualized Happiness-Theory or New Utilitarianism," (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1890) p. 5. Lighthall delivered this essay before the Farmington School of Philosophy in June of 1890.

<sup>73</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Ethics, with a theory of the motive," p. 12

<sup>74</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Sketch of a New Utilitarianism," (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1887) p. 21

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

Yet, fool, how dare I pity thee  
 Because my heart reveres the sages;  
 The fool also lies deep in me;  
 We are all one beneath the ages.<sup>76</sup>

In his essays Lighthall identifies this underlying connection, this oneness, as the Mysterious Power, the source of human will: "The Mysterious Power— the cause of Willing— (our real and deeper self perhaps, in which we may all be one)— is acting here with the pleasure of others in view."<sup>77</sup> Lighthall's Mysterious Power, which he at times called the Unknowable Power and the Universe-Soul, is reminiscent of Emerson's Over Soul, to whom Lighthall acknowledged an intellectual debt. The Mysterious Power lies "at the base of all conscious nature, and also, in the greatest likelihood, of all unconscious Nature,"<sup>78</sup> it holds us together as a society, it controls the "thistles of Hedonism" and the "guilty weed of vice"<sup>79</sup> and it wills us to transcend our own pleasure to attain the pleasure of others.

Of course it is one thing to assert such a thing as the Mysterious Power and quite another to show it to be logically tenable. To this end Lighthall wrestled, repeatedly, with the question of altruism. He dismissed out of hand the argument "that an Altruistic Act, in any true sense, is impossible— that when a man acts for others he is really doing so for his own happiness;"<sup>80</sup> he dismissed as "groundless the allegation that good acts are reducible to selfish principles."<sup>81</sup> Lighthall thus maintained that

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<sup>76</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals*, (Montreal. Witness Printing House, 1887) p. 21

<sup>77</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Sketch of the New Utilitarianism," p. 14

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>80</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Altruistic Act," (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1884) p. 8

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

altruism, that "spiritual plant,"<sup>82</sup> was possible, that it stemmed from what he termed our "underlying pleasure:"

...when a man recalls, however indistinctly, the happiness of all society, with whom he grows to connect, every deed performed for others, he experiences a feeling of vaster finer quality and greater satisfaction than when he turns his thoughts upon himself. But even when he looks upon the happiness of others, if he regards it as only as so much matter causing happiness to himself, he involuntarily refers it to the smaller field (self), and it cannot help being made less. Hence, the Altruistic Act is always preferable.<sup>83</sup>

Note Lighthall's conclusion: the Altruistic Act is not only possible, it is *preferable*, it "brings most complete and widest pleasures into the consciousness of the individual."<sup>84</sup> Although Lighthall's argument is at best weak— he employs the concept of underlying pleasure, really another term for the Mysterious Power, to prove the possibility of altruism and he employs the possibility of altruism to prove the Mysterious Power— he nonetheless believed it to be true, that he had provided a reasonable argument for Christian ethics, of why we should consider the community over ourselves. He had at last answered his life or death question: Christianity or pleasure-theory, which is true?

Lighthall called his moral system— that we are all one beneath the ages, connected by the Mysterious Power and capable of altruism— the New Utilitarianism. "Action for others," he wrote,

is therefore a deep-lying procedure of the same comprehensible kind as action for himself: The Supreme Ethical Principle is that *the feeling subject as individual is to subserve himself entirely to the Universal Feeling Subject; and the less in feeling everywhere to the greater.* Such

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<sup>82</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Sketch of a New Utilitarianism," p 6

<sup>83</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Altruistic Act," p 9

<sup>84</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Sketch of a New Utilitarianism," p. 14

is the duty of the Universe— the Universal Duty!— the proposed New Utilitarianism.<sup>85</sup>

In point of fact, Lighthall's New Utilitarianism was the Christian idealism of late nineteenth and early twentieth century English Canada which stressed the organic nature of society and the inalienable obligations of the individual to society.<sup>86</sup>

In a 1906 article for *The Canadian Magazine* R.S. Somerville described Lighthall as "that rare combination, a practical idealist;" and idealism provided Lighthall with the necessary philosophical base for his more practical pursuits. Somerville went on to write "The dreamer of dreams can be a man of action too. Of a somewhat retiring disposition, he does not stop to consult his own inclinations in advancing any cause which appeals to his sense of public duty."<sup>87</sup> Indeed, imperialism and idealism together formed the leitmotif of Lighthall's long and varied life, they found expression in everything he did. And in the 1880s Lighthall— out of duty, not artistic inclination— involved himself in Canada's nascent literary movement: as a poet, novelist, anthologist and organizer he predictably trumpeted the imperial themes of Empire, history, national unity and the idealist themes of duty, public service and elevated national morality.

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36

<sup>86</sup> In the 1920s Lighthall refined his philosophy. He then argued that duty was "a biological entity, not an intellectual abstraction." Calling it the Outer Consciousness, or the hyperpsych, he maintained that it originally emerged from "the diverse, unstable protiens of the ooze in the floor of the earliest ocean" and that it now formed "the colony of all the living beings of the protoplasmic line...our bodies are but organs of it" In other words, we are duty incarnate. See, W.D Lighthall, "The Outer Consciousness, A Biological Entity," Montreal: privately printed, 1923; W.D Lighthall, "The Cosmic Aspect of the Outer Consciousness," Montreal: privately printed, 1924; and W.D. Lighthall, "The Outer Consciousness and a Future Life," Montreal: privately printed, 1925

<sup>87</sup> R.S. Somerville, *The Canadian Magazine*, vol. xxvi, no. 6, April 1906, p. 554

## Chapter II

*Lighthall the Writer*

John Reade, a Montreal poet and the literary editor of the *Gazette*, published a poem in the September 1888 edition of the *Dominion Illustrated* titled, "To Wilfrid Chateaucclair." Although the poem is not particularly good, in point of fact it is particularly bad, it is worth quoting at length: Wilfrid Chateaucclair was William Lighthall's French *nom de plume*.

I hail thee patriot poet. Far above  
 The mists where groping men take freinds for foes,  
 And hands that should give help are raised for blows  
 And rancour vile usurps the place of love,  
 I see thee stand in thy full stature. Thine eyes rove  
 From scene to scene of the wild throng, amused  
 At monstrous folly, or at times suffused  
 With pity for some hero soul that strove  
 Vainly 'gainst evil. Turning then thy face  
 Of generous hope to where beyond the strife  
 Is peace, thou seest the glory of thy life,  
 Full grown and strong, of that Canadian race,  
 Daughter of God-like races whose proud past  
 Yields the ripe fruit of nationhood at last.<sup>1</sup>

In no uncertain terms Reade stated the two dominant and dominating features of Lighthall's literary career: patriotism and idealism. Lighthall was a poet, novelist and anthologist but he was not an artist. His maxim was simple: art not for art's sake but art for Canada's sake. He neither questioned nor subverted societal values. Rather he he stressed the élitist and conservative values of his class. And he sought a national literature that would simultaneously foster a sense of what it meant to be a Canadian, that would define national traditions and promote a shared commitment to these

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<sup>1</sup> John Reade, "To Wilfrid Chateaucclair," *Dominion Illustrated*, Sept. 1, 1888, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 134. Lighthall once described Reade as "One of the chief figures in Canadian literature, and probably the sweetest poet." (*Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. 460) Such a statement reveals both Lighthall's limited critical faculties and the nature of Canadian literature in the nineteenth century.

traditions. As Charles Mair, a founder of the Canada First Movement and author of the long narrative poem, "Tecumseh," wrote to Lighthall on November 19, 1888: we, the poet and the artist, must "do what lies in us to instil the mass of our people with a pride in their country and its history and traditions."<sup>2</sup> Art was a secondary concern to nationalism, a heirarchy we find immature today, but a heirarchy that typified Lighthall, Mair and the Confederation School of Poets, Canada's first literary movement, as they struggled to keep Canada separate from the United States.

The Confederation poets, poets such as Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Duncan Campbell Scott, Isabella Vallancy Crawford and Fidelis, emerged in response to the doom and gloom of the 1880s, that "period of extreme self-doubt and crisis."<sup>3</sup> To title these men and women Confederation poets is somewhat misleading as they were for the most part all very young in 1867. Lighthall was just ten years old. But as Archibald MacMechan, an important Canadian literary critic, wrote in 1924, "A whole generation had to be born and grow up in the new conditions before a national literature was possible."<sup>4</sup> And as Lighthall once observed, when a generation had grown up knowing only Canada, a group of poets appeared suddenly, they "appeared practically together like a flight of songbirds from the South in April, wafted in by some mighty wind of the spirit."<sup>5</sup> Note the analogy to spring: the Confederation poets promised an awakening, they offered optimism and idealism in opposition to the dogmatic realism of that "self-seeking race of unscrupulous demagogues and rabid news-writers." Moreover, not only did these men and women write poetry, but they

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<sup>2</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>3</sup> Carl Berger, introduction to Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canada Question*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) p. vi

<sup>4</sup> Archibald MacMechan, *Headwaters of a Canadian Literature*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924, 1974) p. 97

<sup>5</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Canadian Poets of the Great War," Presidential Address to the Royal Society of Canada, 1918, p. xlii



had places to publish: periodicals and literary reviews such as *The Week*, *Canadian Magazine*, "At The Mermaid Inn," *The Progress* and the *Dominion Illustrated* carried Canada's nascent literature to a greater audience. W.J. Keith, in *Canadian Literature in English*, offers a concise picture of the Confederation poets: "Through personal friendships, meetings, correspondence and the regular reading of each other's works they came to be associated together in their own minds and...in the minds of the literary public."<sup>6</sup> Incidentally, Lighthall once counted his (vast and very valuable) collection of letters from other Canadian poets among his most valued possessions.

Lighthall was not the centre of the Confederation poets— this distinction belongs to Charles G.D. Roberts of Fredericton— but he was a central figure. Roberts once wrote, "Mr. Lighthall is decidedly one of our most prominent and influential man of letters."<sup>7</sup> And in his 1913 study, *English Canadian Literature*, T.G. Marquis wrote, "No writer has possessed more enthusiasm for Canada or greater hope in Canada's future in material things than William Douw Lighthall of Montreal, and no one has done more to make known to the world Canada's past and what Canadians of the present have been doing."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Lighthall laboured tirelessly towards the literary organization of what he termed that "vast unorganized force," Canadian national feeling.

In December of 1887 Lighthall published his first volume of poetry, *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals or Crimes of Leisure* and for the next half decade he continued to publish poetry in the *Dominion Illustrated*, in Goldwin Smith's *The Week* and in his anthology, *Songs of the Great Dominion*. (He did not publish another volume of poetry

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<sup>6</sup> W.J. Keith, *Canadian Literature in English*, (London: Longman, 1985) p. 33

<sup>7</sup> Sept. 22, 1890. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/6

<sup>8</sup> T.G. Marquis, *English Canadian Literature*, (Toronto: Glasgow, Brock and Company, 1913) p. 560

until 1916, *The Land of Manitou* and in 1922 he published a collection of previously published poems, *Old Measures*. ) Lighthall's early poetry is characterized by its themes of history, ethnography, nature and by its idealism, the very themes he gives expanded attention to in his first novel, *The Young Seigneur or Nation-Making*. Lighthall did not want his book to be labelled a novel; "the book is not a novel," he declared. "It consequently escapes the awful charge of being a novel with a purpose."<sup>9</sup> Charles Mair called it a "political monograph and story combined"<sup>10</sup> while T.G. Marquis classified it as a "race and politico-sociological study."<sup>11</sup> Lighthall's declaration notwithstanding *The Young Seigneur* is a novel. It is an extended work of fiction written in prose, and it had a twofold purpose: to set down a political vision for Canada (a northern utopia of dutiful citizens) and to introduce English Canada to French Canada (a quaint, romantic place.) *The Young Seigneur*, furthermore, offers insight into gender roles in late nineteenth century English Canada, as does Lighthall's most significant and lasting contribution to Canadian literature, *Songs of the Great Dominion*. Released in 1889 Lighthall's anthology remains a remarkable synthesis of late nineteenth century élite English Canadian attitudes towards: Canada, the Empire, women, Quebec and Native culture. And finally Lighthall founded the short-lived Society of Canadian Literature in January, 1889 in order to promote, discuss and celebrate Canada's growing literature.

Although Lighthall's work touches on several themes its most outstanding feature is the overarching and underpinning presence of Lighthall himself. His poetry, his novels and his anthology are all very self-conscious, they are all contrived and they are all deliberate. And neither was this something unique to Lighthall. It was very

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<sup>9</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Young Seigneur*, (Montreal: Wm. Drysdale and Co., 1888) p. iii

<sup>10</sup> Nov. 19, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>11</sup> T.G. Marquis, *English Canadian Literature*, p. 560

much a part of Canada's early literature, that desire to construct national traditions. Nationalism has always been an intellectual, cerebral exercise in Canada. Confederation was neither the spontaneous outburst of nationalism nor the political expression of a common historical memory or of a common cultural/ethnic/linguistic bond. Rather, Confederation was an exercise in expediency. It was, to quote Lighthall, a "solution [to] the old Provincial deadlock."<sup>12</sup> The Confederation poets sought to create a nationalism. "We must forget to ask of a work whether it is Nova Scotian or British Columbian, of Ontario or of New Brunswick, until we have inquired if it is truly Canadian," G.D. Roberts wrote in 1886.

It is the future of Canadian nationality with which every son of Canada is concerned; and our literature will be false to its trust, will fail of that very service for which young nations have ever relied upon their literature if it does not show itself the nurse of all patriotic enthusiasm, and the base of provincial jealousies.<sup>13</sup>

Lighthall may or may not have read this particular article but he most certainly would have agreed with it: its sentiment was nothing less than his magnetic north. And so it is that Lighthall's writing remains essentially conservative, promoting and without even a suggestion of dissent.

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"I have good news this morning," announced John Reade in his review of *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals*. "I proclaim to the world a new Canadian poet." "In a somewhat long experience of review and criticism," he continued, "I do not remember having ever taken up a volume that I could decidedly call superior, after glancing over only a few lines." Reade then titled the opening three poems— "The Confused Dawn," "National

<sup>12</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Canadian Poets of the Great War," p. xii

<sup>13</sup> Charles G.D. Roberts, "Outlook for Literature," Jan 1, 1886, *Halifax Herald*

Hymn" and "Canada Not Last"— "a sort of consecration to [Lighthall's] book."<sup>14</sup> Consecration is an apt word: it shines light on the sanctimonious seriousness which permeates not only *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals* but all of Lighthall's early poetry.

The worship of history and the elevation of ethnicity are central to Lighthall's early poetry. In his book, *Language and Nationalism*, Joshua Fishman argues that "History and ethnography are the reservoirs of symbols and myths, heroes and missions which nationalist elites first mine and then refine in their quest for ethnically unifying and energizing themes."<sup>15</sup> To this end, in "Canadian Faith," Lighthall magnified the military heroism of "Brock the peerless," Dollard, Wolfe, Montcalm, "The high spirit of Tecumseh" and "the eight who fell at Cut Knife." He titled them the

many martyrs  
Who have died to save their country,  
Poured their fresh blood bravely for it,  
And our soil thus consecrated.<sup>16</sup>

Wolfe and Montcalm were not two pawns in European colonialism; they were two martyrs "who died to save their country." Dollard was not an over zealous youth looking to ambush and murder Iroquois fur trappers; he was a martyr who poured his "fresh blood bravely." And Tecumseh was not a co-opted Native caught up in a European war; he was a martyr whose fresh blood consecrated Canadian soil.<sup>17</sup> Note

<sup>14</sup> Montreal Gazette, Jan. 4, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 12/4

<sup>15</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism*, (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1972) p. 16. In his preface to "Tecumseh," for example, Charles Mair states unequivocally that Canadian history is a rich mine of character and incident.

<sup>16</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Old Measures*, (Montreal: A. T. Chapman, 1922) p. 23. Lighthall dated this poem 1890 and it was, he added, "Written when many doubted our future." Yet further indication that Lighthall took patriotism more seriously than art.

<sup>17</sup> Lighthall took military duty seriously. He served in the College Company of the Prince of Wales' Fusiliers from 1877 to 1878 and later he served in the Victoria Rifles. When the Riel Rebellion erupted in Manitoba Lighthall wanted to volunteer but obligations in Montreal prohibited him.

that Lighthall included both French and English in his roll-call of national martyrs. It was necessary to his "quest for ethnically unifying and energizing themes." "Les ancêtres des Anglais et des Français sur ce continent," Lighthall said in a speech on the importance of Dollard to English Canadians, "échangeraient de courtoises relations durant les intervalles de leur guerres, et leur plus braves chefs furent les meilleurs amis. L'histoire relate plusieurs exemples de ce genre."<sup>18</sup> Both national unity and the battlefield, then, find repeated expression in Lighthall's poetry. In "The Battle of La Prairie," for example, he recounted the 1690 battle of La Prairie, Quebec, one of the first military confrontations between England and France in North America. And not surprisingly he viewed this less than insignificant incident as belonging to a "brave old epoch / our age of chivalry."<sup>19</sup> The words "epoch" and "chivalry" connote a gallant affair involving knights in shining armour and reveal the deep depths of Lighthall's romantic, heroic vision of history. The battle of La Prairie, after all, was little more than a skirmish, it did not upset the France / England balance of power and it was most certainly not an epochal or chivalrous event. Again Lighthall wanted to make it clear that despite their wars in the past French and English Canadians shared a common purpose in the present. The final stanza to "The Battle of La Prairie" reads in part:

Were those not brave old races?—  
 Well here they still abide;  
 And yours is one or other,  
 And the second's at your side.

Glorification of the battlefield was very much a part of Lighthall's later poetry as well, the poetry he wrote during the first and second world wars. Old habits die hard.

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<sup>18</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Un document à conserver, texte d'un beau discours de M.W.D. Lighthall à propos de Dollard." *Le Devoir*, June 6, 1911

<sup>19</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. 233

As important as military martyrs were to Lighthall's conception of history, and therefore poetry, so were the loyalists and the pioneers, the men and women who broke the land and laid the foundations of the country. Carl Berger states that "the loyalist tradition [provided] one of the most potent elixers to Canadian imperial sentiment," Canadian nationalist thought.<sup>20</sup> Lighthall himself was "of United Empire Loyalist stock which had strains of military blood, both American and British,"<sup>21</sup> a genealogy he took most seriously. He very much revered the quality of loyalty (he lauded the loyalists as members of "simply the noblest epic migration the world has ever seen— more loftily epic than the retirement of Pius Aeneas from Ilion"<sup>22</sup>) and he very much idealized their rural way of life. His poem "The Loyalists" indicates to what limits Lighthall was prepared to go to idealize the loyalist tradition: "Fair and gentle were the ladies," "Tall and courtly were the men" and "courteous, open-handed" were the children; together this family lived "among the orchards and the tulip / gardens quaint" in "Flemish-gabled houses sprawled with curious / iron dates."<sup>23</sup> Of course this arcadian adventure of pastoral serenity has no bearing on Loyalist reality but reality was not Lighthall's concern— the self-conscious construction of national traditions through literature was his concern. "The Pioneers" is similar as Lighthall extolls the virtues of the pioneer: loyalty, strength, an ability to endure hardship: "Though plain their lives and rude their dress, / No common men were they."<sup>24</sup> Observe the obvious absence of women: Lighthall's conception of

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<sup>20</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 78

<sup>21</sup> John Murray Gibbon, "William Douw Lighthall," in W.P. Percival, ed., *Leading Canadian Poets*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948) p. 107

<sup>22</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. xxii

<sup>23</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Old Measures*, p. 43

<sup>24</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Old Measures*, p. 21. Lighthall originally published this poem in the *Dominion Illustrated*, July 7, 1885, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 7

history was very male-orientated: "for to hunt, to fight, to hew out a farm, one must be a man." Addressing the theme of pioneering in nineteenth century English Canadian poetry David Sinclair writes "the deeds of those who laboured to win the land have become tradition, the lore of the past, upon which the present generation must be made to reflect, and from which the future greatness of [the country] will emerge."<sup>25</sup>

"The Pioneers" is an important poem not only because it seeks to construct a national tradition of loyalty but because it provides a glimpse into Lighthall's conception of the land and of nature. Lighthall saw the pioneers as confronting an intimidating, hostile *land*: "Thank those who there have fought the trees, / And howling wolves and bears." The forest as enemy territory and the animals as the enemy stands in obvious juxtaposition to the present, to *nature*:

All you who on your acres broad,  
Know nature in its charms,  
With pictured dale and fruitful sod,  
And herds on verdant farms.

Nature is charming, quaint, dotted with little houses on the hillside overlooking grazing herds of cattle. Lighthall's vision of nature is nothing less than key: obviously the Canadian land itself has not changed in reality— land is neither hostile nor welcoming, land is necessarily neutral— it has changed only in Lighthall's mind. "That is," Margaret Atwood writes, "landscapes in poems are often interior landscapes; they are maps of a state of mind."<sup>26</sup> Remember, and this cannot be stressed enough, Lighthall's state of mind: he was seeking national traditions in a native land: the land, therefore, could not very well be alienating, it had to provide a sense of belonging.

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<sup>25</sup> Frank M. Tierney and Glenn Clever, eds., *Nineteenth Century Narrative Poetry*, (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1988) Introduction by David Sinclair. p. viii

<sup>26</sup> Margaret Atwood, *Survival*, (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) p. 73

Not unpredictably Lighthall wrote several euphoric tributes to nature and, again not unpredictably, to the wonderful winter climate: "All hail to a night when the Northern Light / A welcome to us waves."<sup>27</sup> Translated: Canada's vigorous climate imparts strength, promises greatness. In the end, however, Lighthall remains a detached observer of nature offering simple description. It is as if by describing nature as quaint and picturesque nature will become quaint and picturesque.

It should now be readily apparent that Lighthall was nothing if not self-conscious: his diction is archaic ("With pictured dale and fruitful sod, / And herds on verdant farms") and his conclusions are didactic ("Earnestly do I adjure you / To believe and trust your country."<sup>28</sup>) And no where is this more obvious than in his so-called patriotic verse, the three poems John Reade called a consecration, "The Confused Dawn," "National Hymn" and "Canada Not Last." It is here that he spells out in no uncertain terms his vision of a native land, a native land called Canada inhabited by a native people called Canadians. In "Canada Not Last," for example, Lighthall related his travels through Italy and its wonderful cities of Venice, Florence and Rome: "Rome, Florence, Venice— noble, fair and quaint, / They reign in robes of magic round me here."<sup>29</sup> Yet as majestic, romantic and historic as Italy was, Lighthall longed to return to Canada: "Not all could match the growing thought of home." But home was not something defined, it remained tenuous, "fading, blotted, dim, a picture faint." The future, however, promised glory.

I see the sun break over you; the mist  
On the hills that lift from iron bases grand  
Their heads superb! — the dream, it is my native land.

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<sup>27</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "All Hail to a Night," *Old Measures*, p. 30. See also, "Land Laurentine" and "Winter's Dawn in Lower Canada" in *Old Measures*, pp. 32, 40.

<sup>28</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Canadian Faith," *Old Measures*, p. 25

<sup>29</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals*, p. 7



The future promised, to borrow a phrase, "a home and native land." Charles G.D. Roberts both praised Lighthall's poetry and shared his vision: "When I re-read your "Canada Not Last" I am filled with envy. Believe me that conclusion is simply superb, glorious."<sup>30</sup> Bliss Carman, one of the most important Confederation poets, was equally enthusiastic.

My friend Professor Roberts happened to show me a small publication of verse by you, containing a poem called "Canada Not Last." It has a rare and ringing beauty that startles one to enthusiasm. I think it is a splendid note of patriotic love.<sup>31</sup>

And Arthur J. Lockhart, a now forgotten Canadian poet who at the time was living in the United States, wrote, "The last stanza of "Canada Not Last" delights me as I read it over and over."<sup>32</sup> Roberts wrote patriotic verse similar to Lighthall's, the sort that literary critic Malcolm Ross feels ought best be left to die.<sup>33</sup> Yet even bad poetry makes enormous offerings. In "An Ode for the Canadian Confederacy" Roberts writes,

Awake my country, the hour is great with change!  
Under this gloom which yet obscures the land,  
From ice-blue strait and stern Laurentian range  
To where giant peaks our western bound command,  
A deep voice stirs...<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Nov. 21, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3 When Lighthall published *Old Measures* Roberts wrote "It particularly interests me to find how well the old, old favorites like "The Confused Dawn" and "Canada Not Last" survive the test of time. The latter thrills me now, even more than when I first read it." May 7, 1930. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>31</sup> Jan. 12, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3. Lighthall had a falling out of sorts with Carman in 1896 concerning the loan of his manuscript of *The False Chevalier*. "The MS was kept nearly two years by this Bohemian on his shelves," Lighthall wrote, "and returned in none too complete condition." Sept. 13, 1896. FAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 1, file 6

<sup>32</sup> n.d. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>33</sup> Malcolm Ross, *Poets of the Confederation*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960) p. vii

<sup>34</sup> Quote in Northrop Frye, "Sharing the Continent," in Eli Mandel and David Taras, eds., *A Passion for Identity*, (Toronto: Methuen, 1987) p 208-209

As Northrop Frye observed, Roberts "is not expressing his feelings but talking about the feelings he thinks he ought to have, and the clue to his poetic insincerity is the remote surveying vision that is really focussed on nothing but a map."<sup>35</sup> Roberts and, by extension, Lighthall, were intentionally trying to stir up patriotic sentiment. Thus "The Confused Dawn."

"The Confused Dawn" is the conversation between a "Young Man" and a "Seer," a prophet of some sort. The young man is, as the title suggests, confused, his senses tell him that there is something out there, that "Some magic moment sure is nigh." He sees "Dim grandeur" and he hears "murmurs indistinctly fly" but he is unable to focus on what he sees or make out what he hears. In frustration he turns to the Seer, "O Seer, the curtain roll." "The Vision, mortal it is this," responds the Seer,

Dead mountain, forest, knoll and tree  
Awaken all endued with bliss  
A native land— O think!— to be—  
Thy native land.

As for "The Cry thou couldst not understand," continues the Seer,

Which runs through that new realm of light,  
From Breton's to Vancouvers strand  
O'er many a landscape bright...  
The great refrain, "A NATIVE LAND!"<sup>36</sup>

Frye's analysis of Roberts poetry is applicable here: Lighthall's "remote surveying vision...is really focussed on nothing but a map," a map of Canada from Cape Breton to Vancouver Island. "This sense is not that of the possession of the land, but precisely the absence of possession," Frye maintained.<sup>37</sup> Lighthall felt what he thought he was supposed to feel as a young man in a young nation: he felt it, quite consciously, to be

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals*, p. 5

<sup>37</sup> Northrop Frye, "Sharing the Continent," p. 214

his duty to lay claim to that land mass and to "instil in the mass of...people...a pride in their country and its history and its traditions." "Every true man," Lighthall claimed, "is a founder of the future of his / State."<sup>38</sup> To this end Lighthall did not limit himself to poetry. "The Confused Dawn," wrote Charles Mair in 1888 "is aptly named in this our period of doubt and uncertainty— conditions which you seek to resolve in your recently published *The Young Seigneur*."<sup>39</sup>

## II

*A New Canadian Work of Surpassing Interest***Romantic and Philosophical**

Dealing with the atmosphere of Contemporary French Canadian Life  
and Marking out a Definite Future for Canada

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*The Young Seigneur*  
or  
*Nation Making* 40

"I am not hopeless," Lighthall wrote to his publisher on January 14, 1888, "that [*The Young Seigneur*' s] ideas will attract a great deal of attention permanently, if not all at once."<sup>41</sup> Lighthall was both right and wrong: *The Young Seigneur* would attract a great deal of attention but it was far from permanent. It received (favorable) reviews across Canada, in Great Britain and in the United States when first released but it died a quick death. T.G. Marquis noted this, but, he insisted, "this is the fault of the reading public and not of the author."<sup>42</sup> Today the Can. Lit. canon includes Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It In The Bush* and William Kirby's *The Golden Dog* as

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<sup>38</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Founders," in *Old Measures*, p. 11

<sup>39</sup> Nov. 19, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>40</sup> From the advertising circular which accompanied the release of *The Young Seigneur*. *Lighthall Papers*, 2/19

<sup>41</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 3/11

<sup>42</sup> T.G. Marquis, *English Canadian Literature*, p. 560

representative of late nineteenth century English Canadian writing; and W.H. New, in his recently published *A History of Canadian Literature*, does not once mention *The Young Seigneur*. Yet Lighthall's first novel offers a window into Canada's nascent literature and its relationship to the political context of the 1880s, into English Canada's attitudes towards French Canada and into the role of women.

Written against the bleak backdrop of the 1880s, *The Young Seigneur* is very much a political manifesto, a tract for the times. Indeed, as Lighthall wrote in the preface,

The chief aim of this book is the perhaps too bold one— *to map out a future for the Canadian nation*, which has been hitherto drifting without any plan.<sup>43</sup>

The story takes place "In the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy odd, about six years after the confederation" when Mr. Chrysler, an Ontario M.P., goes "down into Quebec, an event then almost as rare as a Quebecker entering Ontario"<sup>44</sup> upon the invitation of Chamilly Haviland, his colleague on Parliament Hill, and the young seigneur. Haviland, we learn in his auto-biographical sketch, which when read becomes a story within the story, is a young French Canadian, a member of the élite who is fluent in both the English language and culture. And he has invited Chrysler to his home in part so that he may unroll his proposed map for the future. "The national work will never cease to attract me," Haviland tells Chrysler with "enthusiasm."

*Is it not sublime this nation-making?*— that this generation, and particularly a few individuals like you, sir, and myself should be honored by Heaven with the task of founding a people! It is as grand as the nebulous making of the stars.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Young Seigneur*, p. iii

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9

Although "sublime," "honored by Heaven," and "grand as the nebulous making of the stars" suggest a belief in Canadian destiny by divine decree this did not absolve Haviland of his duty, it only gave it more significance, more urgency. He proposes therefore that Canadians must have a reason to be Canadians, something that sets Canadians apart, something that inspires Canadians to national work. "I propose a clear ideal for them— a vision of what Canada ought to be and do." And he names his vision Ideal Canada: "As Plato's mind's eye saw his Republic, Bacon his New Atlantis, More his Utopia; so let us see before and above us the Ideal Canada, and boldly aim at the programme of doing something in the world."<sup>46</sup>

Chrysler is, of course, anxious to hear more details of the Ideal Canada but it is not until well into his stay that Haviland outlines his vision and even then the time must be right— early morning on the St. Lawrence River against the backdrop of a spectacular sunrise.

"It is in Nature," said Chamilly, comprehending that Chrysler felt the scene, "that I can love Canada most and become renewed into efforts for the good of her human sons. I feel in the presence of this,"— he waved his hand upward, "that I could speak of my ideas."<sup>47</sup>

As in Lighthall's poetry nature is not intimidating, it is inspiring. Influenced by the transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau Lighthall has Haviland look out onto nature with a wonder close to worship. He is inspired to transcend the physical and approach the ultimate and final truth, in this case, the Ideal Canada. And so it is that as the sun rises before Haviland and Chrysler so too does Haviland's vision. "The foundation must be the Ideal Physical Man," he said. "We must never stop short of working until...every Canadian is the strongest and most

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126. All subsequent quotations in this paragraph appear in *The Young Seigneur*, pp. 126-133.

beautiful man that can be thought." To this end "Physical culture must be placed on a more reasonable basis...We require a military term of training, compulsory on all young men, for its effect in strengthening the person and strengthening the will." Moreover, every Canadian must be taught the True Education: Canadian history, Canadian literature and Canadian traditions by Canadian teachers; Canadians must be taught the habits of industry, economy, progress and seriousness; "But especially, let every Canadian be educated to see The National Work, and how to do it." The government must be led by the motto, "Government by the best intelligence." Meaning: "There must be No Proletariat;" "Fortunes should be looked upon as national, and we should seek means to bring the wealthy to apply their fortunes to patriotic uses;" "There must be No Vice." And the artist, the poet, the novelist must "express the spirit of our work," the national work. (Which, remember, was Lighthall's self-appointed task as a writer.)

The driving force behind Haviland's Ideal Canada, the force that would realize the visionary, the force that would prompt Canadians to transcend their interests for the national interest, "to lay hold on purity and righteousness," was, naturally, duty: Lighthall's philosophy of idealism, the New Utilitarianism. In his preface to *The Young Seigneur* Lighthall wrote,

A charge of Metaphysics will be advanced also, by a generation not too willing to think. *Mon ami*, what we give you of that is not very hard. If you cannot understand it, leave it out or study Emerson. The main subject of the book [the Ideal Canada] cannot be treated otherwise than with an attempt to ground it deeply.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii. The *Montreal Daily Star* gave *The Young Seigneur* a good review but it did add that "The book for most readers is heavily handicapped by its metaphysics and politics." August 25, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 12/4

Haviland, thus, experiences a series of philosophical trials and tribulations before receiving an ultimate revelation. It is while he is attending a meeting of the Centre-Seekers, a secret society dedicated to the discussion of philosophy, that we catch a glimpse of his emerging yet embryonic idealism. One member is both a devoted follower of Epicurus and an agnostic: "Pleasure, at least, is real," he announces. "Wrap yourself in it, for you can do no better." Another member shouts in agreement: "That's my system. There's philosophy in it too, by jove! I've done lots of philosophy by the smoke of a cigarette. It's philosophy properly tamed, in evening dress." A third member, a detached, angry young Frenchman named Quinet, agrees: "La morale de la cigarette." Haviland is outraged, he resists the temptation of a philosophy that can only offer the here and now: "'I refuse that,' I cried to myself. 'I ask a Permanent, an Eternal.'" And although he is well read in "the profound work of the monarch of modern thinkers—Immanuel Kant"<sup>49</sup> he remains inarticulate, unable to express what he feels. It is only in a later dream that everything appears to Haviland as it should be, that suddenly everything makes sense. Dreaming of a former philosophy lecture on the ideas of Kant, Haviland recalls the professor's words:

"Conscience is reason!" and these words vaguely reached me, his figure dissolved into a rolling cloud, which grew at once into a shape of giant form, and addressed me in echoing tones: "The unalterable Ought! the unalterable Ought!" reverberating from the depths and heights.

The dream continues as Haviland, inspired by Kant, now sees at last the Mysterious Power, that which connects everything, that which explains why we ought to behave as if our personal maxims were to become universal maxims: "Space itself seemed to become the veiled countenance of a Mysterious Power." This dream, Haviland asserts, was more of a revelation: he is now able to articulate what before he was

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31

only able to feel. "I saw that DUTY is the Secret of the World," he cried. Logically, "The nation must found and shape its own work on the same deep idea."<sup>50</sup>

Lighthall's vision recieved excellent reviews and much applause. Charles G.D. Roberts, in his review for *The Progress*, wrote,

Its ideal, presented with force and persuasiveness, is that of a united Canada working on distinctive lines to the highest and purest national development...The Canadianism of the work embraces not only our race and its aspirations, but our splendid landscapes as well. I regard the work as a veritable 'Book of Gold' for all young Canada.<sup>51</sup>

Arthur J. Lockhart told Lighthall that he had struck "the Canadian Moral muse." "You seem a new Sir Thomas More," he continued. "Utopia... [is] liable to become fact, and the place of realism, the banks of the St. Lawrence."<sup>52</sup> The *Montreal Daily Witness* declared: "There is much in the book which young Canada may well ponder thoughtfully...There is no nobler work than to take part in laying the foundations of a nation on such a basis of righteousness, of purity, as is revealed in Haviland's "Ideal."<sup>53</sup> With reference to the pessimism of the 1880s Charles Mair wrote, "The map you unroll is a noble one, and though our future seems dark and cloudy, and though our national problem bustles with difficulties, if Canadians of all nationalities have but faith in each other and are true, one [read we] shall yet emerge into the sunlight of our national life."<sup>54</sup> Yet the *Montreal Daily Star* further maintained that *The Young Seigneur* as a political vision was secondary to *The Young Seigneur* as a romance: "If we mistake not, the book marks an epoch in our literature, and will be appreciated beyond our borders, not for its motives, nor for its political diatribes, but for its

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193

<sup>51</sup> n.d. *Lighthall Papers*, 2/19

<sup>52</sup> n.d. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/1

<sup>53</sup> Sept. 1, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 12/4

<sup>54</sup> Nov. 19, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3



keen appreciation of the romantic and picturesque in French Canada.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the British advertising circular announced it as "A ROMANCE OF FRENCH-CANADIAN LIFE." Furthermore, "as a picture of the most vital and characteristic aspects of French Canadian life it is without rival."<sup>56</sup>

As a romance set in Quebec *The Young Seigneur* is typical of early English Canadian fiction, of its "fascination with the otherness of French Canada,"<sup>57</sup> but for Lighthall setting the novel in Quebec had the more important purpose of introducing English Canadians to life in Quebec. As he stated in his preface he hoped "to make sense of the atmosphere of French Canada understood by those who speak English."<sup>58</sup> Lighthall believed—passionately—in a united Canada, in one nation with two languages. Concomitantly he stressed education ("Education in our history, especially that part of it which should show the entry among us of each important race is, therefore, of greatest importance to our nationality."<sup>59</sup>) and tolerance ("Let me urge on every thinking Boer, with all the emphasis in my power and the experience of a Canadian, in whose country two races work together in harmony, that this alone is the road to national happiness."). *The Young Seigneur*, then, attempts to educate English Canadians and, therefore, to encourage tolerance, understanding and, ultimately, national happiness. Charles Mair agreed:

It is of the greatest importance, with a view to our future as a Canadian nation, in which I am a firm believer, that Canadians of our race should be truly informed as to the aspirations which reside in the better mind of Lower Canada. If these aspirations are really national and not racial

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<sup>55</sup> August 25, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 12/4

<sup>56</sup> The 1892 edition of *Songs of the Great Dominion*, called *Canadian Songs and Poems*, included an advertising circular for *The Young Seigneur*, p. 466.

<sup>57</sup> Carole Gerson, *A Purer Taste, The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) p. 110

<sup>58</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Young Seigneur*, p. iii

<sup>59</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 19/3

the knowledge of that fact will go further than anything else to bring about the reconciliation of pre-concieved antagonisms without which we can never become a nation.<sup>60</sup>

And so it is that Lighthall attempts to outline the national aspirations of French Canada through Haviland and to dispel the myth that "there is to be no being to be met in these forsaken wastes, except a superstitious peasant, clothed all year in 'beefs' and homespun, capped with the tuque, girded with the sash and carrying the capuchin hood on his shoulders."<sup>61</sup> In the end however, Lighthall offers no better understanding of Quebec than did the habitant stereotype but he does, unwittingly, offer insight into how English Canada viewed Quebec.

Chrysler's invitation is really our invitation: "'It is a pity the rest of the country does not know my people more closely," Haviland wrote in his invitation. "If you will do my house the honor of your presence, I am sure there is much of their life to which we could introduce you."<sup>62</sup> Lighthall cannot overstress the significance of Chrysler's visit to Quebec. After all, "Here...are those who speak the partner voice in our Confederation, and whom we should know as brothers."<sup>63</sup> And so as Chrysler discovers we discover. Haviland is of course the first French Canadian we meet— he is bilingual, he is bicultural, he is modern, he is liberal and he has a national vision. He is very much a Laurier, or if you will, a Trudeau: "so elegantly French, yet so honestly Canadian," to quote Ramsay Cook.<sup>64</sup> Haviland is neither anti-English nor pro-French: he is Canadian. And he therefore stands in contrast to Grandmoulin, the *big windmill* French nationalist— "I address you further, Frenchmen of Canada, as an

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<sup>60</sup> Nov. 19, 1888. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>61</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Young Seigneur*, p. 106

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71

<sup>64</sup> Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977) p. 194

oppressed remnant, long crushed and evil treated under alien conquerors."<sup>65</sup> Indeed, in one scene Haviland takes the hand of De La Lande, a nationalist, and, placing it in the hand of Chrysler, announces, "There!...Say whatever you can in that position. *That is the position of the Canadian races.*"<sup>66</sup> Haviland is less representative of reality than he is of Lighthall's wishful thinking: if only more French Canadians could see themselves as Canadians.

In the same way that Lighthall's hero is more interesting for what he tells us about English Canada so is Lighthall's description of the Quebec social order. Although the seigneurial system of land tenure had been abolished Haviland is nonetheless titled 'the young seigneur' because in a fond, elegiac sort of way Lighthall and his English Canadian peers admired the idea of an elite, natural leadership and an obedient, collective population. It was very genteel. Class lines were drawn and discernable. In one of the very first scenes of the novel Haviland embraces two young children who in turn adorn him with hugs and affection. Chrysler looks on and is touched by what is a very paternal relationship between a seigneur and his people. That such a scene had nothing to do with the reality of the seigneurial system is lost on Lighthall and that the seigneurial system had been abolished is not important. What is important, then, is the seigneurial system as symbol. It represents a very traditional, conservative, solid social order. On the one hand Lighthall and his peers in the imperialist movement worshipped progress but on the other hand the possibility of social atomization and the breakdown of order gave them anxiety and they saw in Quebec a resistance to progress. They "discovered in the province conservative principles, traditional values, and a hostility to capitalism which they themselves admired and shared."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *The Young Seigneur*, p. 141

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113

<sup>67</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 140

When, for example, Chrysler looks around him at the congregation he is overcome with a reverence, "he could not shake off the feeling that it was not individuals he saw, but a People. A People! No flippant thing is it to feel oneself in the presence of so great an Organism."<sup>68</sup>

Although the imperialists may have romanticized what they perceived to be the Quebec social order they did not necessarily romanticize the role of the Catholic church. On the first morning of his visit Chrysler attends church with Haviland and he is amazed to learn that the church is at once the centre of the town geographically and culturally. "He had been there but a few hours when he discovered [the town's] central fact. The Central Fact of Domillière was the Parish Church...No relation of life, no thought, no interest, no age in years, but had its most intimate relation with it."<sup>69</sup> A fact, no less, that would not be possible in the "democratic Province" of Ontario.<sup>70</sup> Haviland is further amazed by the sermon, "a bold denunciation of the Liberals, named by their party name."

"Follow [France] not! It is the Liberals who have done this. Crush out the seeds of that doctrine! Let the spirits which call themselves by this name never have peace among you. Avoid them! Distrust them! Have nothing to do with that people! May the wrath of our Father descend upon them, the damnation of the infernal dungeons! and—" [the Curé] brought down his book's edge loudly on the pulpit— "the excommunication of the Church of God, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman!"<sup>71</sup>

Chrysler learns how the Church succeeded in destroying the *Institut Canadien*, the "enfant perdu of Liberalism," through a "series of combined assaults by episcopal summons, a pulpit crusade, excommunication, refusal of burial, encouragement of

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<sup>68</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Young Seigneur*, p. 71

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 70

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68

dissensions."<sup>72</sup> According to Haviland and his Red Radical friend, Quinet, ultramontanist and its concomitant control over the population retarded the progress of Quebec and would, in the end, mean the disappearance of the French all together in North America. Calling the Jesuits and the Church "the evil geniuses of history" Quinet argued that because of their forced "servitude" and "obedience" the people of Quebec were "a disappearing order." "Ecclesiasticism ruins us," he concludes.<sup>73</sup>

Related to Chrysler's discovery of Quebec's religious culture is his discovery of Quebec's political culture. At the time of his visit Haviland is involved in an important by-election to win a seat in the Provincial Legislature, a by-election which quickly becomes a microcosm of the larger debate in Quebec: the *Bleus* vs. the *Rouges*: conservatism and the church vs. liberalism and the secular. And there is no question of Lighthall's bias—Haviland is a liberal Liberal. During a public debate Lighthall synthesizes the debate through the speeches of Grandmoulin and Haviland respectively. Grandmoulin stands before the crowd and with marvellous rhetorical skills he appeals to a history of conquest and subordination. "There are no facts more patent than that the English are our conquerors, that they rule our country, that they are aliens, heretics, enemies of our Holy Religion, and that they are heaping up unrighteous riches, while we are becoming despised and poor." And he appeals to a French future. "If you stand by me you can make our country purely and powerfully French! The ballot gives us the government: we will legislate the English. We will repay their oppressions and leave the Frenchman free."<sup>74</sup> When Haviland addresses the crowd he too appeals to history but to a history of generosity and co-operation.

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 111. Lighthall's reference to the refusal of burial is a reference to the very famous Guibord affair, a member of the *Institut* who was denied burial in the consecrated grounds of the cemetery.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142

"Where is the oppression of which [Grandmoulin] makes cry? The very existence of each of you in his full liberty and speaking French ought to be a sufficient argument. Speak, act, worship, buy, sell— who hinders us so long as we obey the laws...Of oppression by our good fellow-citizens, let then no more be said." And he too appeals to the future but, again, a Canadian future. "Is it not more natural or not that we should find pride in a country and a nation which have accepted our name and history, and are constantly seeking our citizen-like affection to make the union with us complete?...Identify yourselves with a nation vaster than your race, and cultivate your talents to put you at its head."<sup>75</sup> In the end, despite the collusion of Grandmoulin and the Church and despite their widespread practice of vote buying, Haviland wins the election. He declines victory, however, when he learns that one of his supporters also bought votes: the means do not justify the end.

Lighthall's representation of Quebec, its social order and its religious and political culture, is based more on his wishful thinking than on reality. True, the Church wielded tremendous control over the political and cultural agenda and, also true, liberal dissent counterbalanced the Church. But Haviland's vision of Canada and the world are very much the imperialist vision: a united, independent Canada with a paradoxical view to the ultimate union of humanity. During his political address, for example, Haviland makes an appeal to "the noon-day conception of the fraternity of mankind, liberty, equality, good-will."<sup>76</sup> Such an appeal could only be made in an English novel, in a French reality it would have gone over like a lead zeppelin. Carl Berger notes that imperialists practiced "not a little blindness" when it came to Quebec: "they often concealed from themselves the degree to which imperialism was

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146

repugnant to French Canadians."<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Lighthall acknowledged Quebec's latent distrust of imperialism but he remained convinced that Quebec could eventually be made to see its virtues. He noted that French Canadians often dismissed imperialism with "Voilà leur maudit programme;" nonetheless, "If they can be shown an Imperialism such that the dangers they dread will not occur, and if in limited practice such do not occur, they will not really be hard to convince of the advantages of a general union."<sup>78</sup> In the final analysis *The Young Seigneur* offers more insight into English Canadian attitudes than it does "to make some of the atmosphere of French Canada understood by those who speak English."

*The Young Seigneur*, furthermore, reveals the imperialist/idealist attitude towards women. Running beneath the main plots of Haviland's Ideal Canada and Chrysler's introduction to life in Quebec is the sub-plot of Alexandra Grant, Haviland's fiancé and eventual wife. Lighthall here employs the tried and tired metaphor of marriage to describe the Canadian confederation: Alexandra is English, Haviland is French. But what is infinitely more interesting are Lighthall's descriptions of Alexandra: virginal, pure, angelic, "a Princess-Madonna."<sup>79</sup> "She could only be compared, standing there, to an angel guarding Paradise!"<sup>80</sup> As Beatrice to Dante so Alexandra to Haviland: like Beatrice, Alexandra is a symbol for divine love; like Beatrice, Alexandra dies very young and like Beatrice, Alexandra guides Haviland. Indeed, she guides all of Canada. "Canada, beloved, thy cause is led by an angel."<sup>81</sup> But at the same time Alexandra is neither frivolous nor silly. She is earnest. She

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<sup>77</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 145

<sup>78</sup> Sept. 24, 1904. *Lighthall Papers*, collected pamphlets.

<sup>79</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Young Seigneur*, p. 193

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198

aims high, towards the same ideals as Haviland. She quotes poetry from memory, "Thou must either strive and rise / Or thou must sink and die."<sup>82</sup> And when duty calls, she answers. Alexandra Grant, then, is at once the feminine ideal and the masculine ideal. Which explains why Haviland pays attention to her, listens to her ideas and feels she is both worthy and capable of hearing his ideas. "I was suprised," Haviland wrote in his autobiography, "to discover that her intelligence was master of the [Ideal Canada] without effort."<sup>83</sup> The significance is nothing less than fascinating: only those women who subscribe to the masculine ideal (serious, idealistic and bound by duty) without compromising the feminine ideal (pure, virginal and angelic) will be taken seriously, will be accorded a position in society beyond subordination. Indeed, at one point Lighthall described Alexandra as a woman who would some day rank with men.<sup>84</sup>

*The Young Seigneur* ends in romantic tragedy: the death of Haviland. He steps out into the night, into a howling rain storm, onto the river. "How strange to enjoy such beating rain," Chrysler pondered, "such blinding darkness and fierce contest with nature!"<sup>85</sup> Haviland drowns. Margaret Atwood argues that this is typical of Canadian literature: if the American way of death is death by violence and the English way of death is death by history then the Canadian way of death is death by accident. And even more specifically, death by nature.<sup>86</sup> It points to Canada's colonial complex, the lack of confidence needed for grand, stunning deaths, and it points to Canada's divided approach to nature, what we are supposed to feel versus what we in fact feel. Nature

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199

<sup>86</sup> Margaret Atwood, *Survival*, p. 166



is supposed to inspire yet in point of fact it kills. Ironically, therefore, this unconscious element, Haviland's death by nature, betrays the self-conscious tone of the book, optimism. And it reveals how Lighthall had neither overcome colonialism nor reconciled himself to nature. Lighthall did not intend this reading. On the self-conscious level he made it clear that despite Haviland's death his Ideal would live on. The final chapter, called "Not The End," sees Chrysler "raising his voice with rejuvenated energy in support of good will and progress" and Quinet, formerly the disaffected radical, now taking up Haviland's cause in the newspapers.

"L'ideé Canadienne too," Quinet asserts with hope and fire, in his seer-like editorials, "is not lost; it is founded on the deepest basis of existence: on the simplicity of common sense; on the true affections, the true aspirations of the people, on righteousness, on love of God, on DESTINY!"

#### THE END.<sup>87</sup>

*The Young Seigneur*, like the young seigneur himself, died a merciful death. Nevertheless, as a document it illuminates the relationship of Canadian literature to Canadian nationalism, imperialist attitudes towards Quebec and, to some extent, the imperialist/idealist attitude towards women. But while *The Young Seigneur* subsists on the hinterland of Can. Lit. Lighthall's anthology, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, remains in the heartland as a "landmark of cultural publication."<sup>88</sup>

#### III

"A national literature is an essential element in the formation of national character," E.H. Dewart wrote in his introduction to *Selections from Canadian Poets*, Canada's first anthology of poetry published in 1864. "It is not merely the record of a

<sup>87</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Young Seigneur*, p. 200

<sup>88</sup> Roy Daniels, "Confederation to the First World War," in Carl F. Klinck, ed., *Literary History of Canada*, 2nd edition, vol. 1, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) p. 211

country's mental progress," he continued, "it is the expression of it's intellectual life, the bond of national unity, and the guide of national energy." But, he sighed, "It is to be regretted that the tendency to sectionalism and disintegration, which is the political weakness of Canada, meets no counterpoise in the literature of the country." Dewart even argued that Canada was probably the only country in the world to greet its poetry with "so much coldness and indifference."<sup>89</sup> Lighthall certainly agreed with Dewart's argument on the importance of a national literature to the national character but at the same time he certainly dismissed Dewart's fatalism. And in his introduction to *Songs of the Great Dominion* he made this clear.

The most remarkable point of difference between the selections of Dewart and the poetry which has followed, is the tone of exultation and confidence which the singers have assumed since Confederation, for up to that epoch the verse was apologetic and depressed. Everything now points hopefully.<sup>90</sup>

Indeed, Lighthall's introduction and anthology read like the national anthem. Yet *Songs of the Great Dominion* must not be considered simply a patriotic statement. Deconstruction reveals fascinating insights into the imperialist ethos, gender roles, Quebec, Native culture and nature.

*Songs of the Great Dominion* underscores the intimacy between Canadian art and Canadian nationalism. In the galley proof Lighthall included the following annotation.

In the spring of 1888 I saw in the window of E. Picken a Canterbury Poets volume entitled "Australian Ballads and Rhymes." Being interested in our own poets, I bought and read it and was much pleased. On thinking over the subject I came to the conclusion that we could do as well in Canada, and fired with this patriotic idea, wrote the publishers offering to complete the volume. They soon accepted.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> E.H. Dewart, *Selections from Canadian Poets*, (Montreal: John Lovel, 1864) pp. ix, x

<sup>90</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. xxxv

<sup>91</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, (galley proof, *Lighthall Papers*.)

Lighthall was not *fired* by a literary idea, through an anthology of Canadian poetry he intended to stoke the fires of patriotism. Although G.D. Roberts sent a letter of reference on behalf of Lighthall to the Walter Scott publishing house in London, England he also cautioned Lighthall on the shape the prospective anthology should take. "I would suggest," Roberts wrote on May 23, 1888, ". that the collection should aim to show *the best*— as well as the most Canadian of our poetry. It should not, I think, be a specialized collection."<sup>92</sup> Lighthall agreed in principle. On July 2 he sent out a circular to Canadian poets requesting submissions in which he wrote, "What are most desired are (besides the best literary bits) pieces and passages *distinctive of Canada*, drawn from its scenery, life, races, history, feelings— the canoe, forest, toboggan, settlements, North-West and so forth."<sup>93</sup> In other words literary quality will be a consideration but it will be a secondary consideration. Roberts again cautioned Lighthall on July 7: "I approve your plan of making the anthology distinctively Canadian, but find at the same time that it would fail to represent fully the development of Canadian song if it absolutely excluded such work which is, like much of the best English and American work, *cosmopolitan!* Will you consider this point— tell me what you think of it."<sup>94</sup> Lighthall surely considered Roberts point but he did not think much of it. And he admitted it. In his introduction he acknowledged that he had deliberately passed over the "subjective and unlocal" in favour of the distinctive. "The present is an imperfect presentation of Canadian poetry from a purely literary point of view," he stated. "It is therefore greatly to be desired that a purely literary anthology may soon be brought together by someone."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>93</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>94</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 1/3

<sup>95</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p xxxiv

But if *Songs of the Great Dominion* was an imperfect presentation from a purely literary point of view, it was a perfect presentation from a purely jingoistic point of view. Simply, Lighthall intended that Canada's second anthology of poetry be a monument to imperialism. Be masters in your own house, the imperialists argued, but let that house be the British Empire. To this end he arranged 163 patriotic poems by fifty-six patriotic poets into nine thematic sections in order that the reader "shall hear [in Canada and its poetry] the chants of a new nationality, weaving in with songs of the Empire, of its heroes, of its Queen."<sup>96</sup> Not surprisingly Lighthall opened his anthology with the section titled "The Imperial Spirit" containing such poems as the self-evident "Advance of the Empire," "Empire First" and an ode to the battle of Hastings simply titled, "Hastings:" "And as we gather into *one*, let us recall with pride / That we are of the blood of those who fought when Harold / died."<sup>97</sup> The important literary review in London, *The Athenaeum*, gave a more than good review to *Songs* which read in part, when "we come upon poems of a national character, it is to find verses whose loyalty to the empire and affection for the mother country cannot but touch every English heart."<sup>98</sup> Lighthall wrote a letter of thanks to *The Athenaeum* for its kind review and words of encouragement. "Nothing, moreover," he wrote, "does more towards binding the Empire together than these expressions from representative men."<sup>99</sup> The remaining eight sections, while they do not express such adoration for the Empire, all give expression to the imperialist ethos: The New

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxiv

<sup>97</sup> John Reade, "Hastings," in W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. 4. The "we" of Reade's poem refers to Canadians.

<sup>98</sup> *The Athenaeum*, Sept 28, 1889, *Lighthall Papers*, 3/13

<sup>99</sup> Nov. 7, 1889. From a letter tipped inside an autographed copy of *Songs of the Great Dominion* to the Scottish Society of Literature and Art in The Rufus Hathaway Collection of Canadian Literature, The University of New Brunswick Library.

Nationality, The Indian, The Voyageur and Habitant, Settlement Life, Sports and Free Life, The Spirit of Canadian History, Places and (by far the largest section) Seasons.

One important Canadian poet and critic rebuked Lighthall for "his utter lack of literary standard." Not one to mince his words Wilfred Campbell published a scathing review of *Songs of the Great Dominion* in the widely read column, "At The Mermaid Inn" in *The Globe*, despite the fact that Lighthall had included twelve of his poems. Campbell bemoaned the idea that this anthology "is being sold in England and goes into the hands of cultured English men and women as representative of our best work." He maintained "that true Canadian poetry is neither represented nor even foreshadowed" because of Lighthall's decision to create a patriotic rather than a literary anthology. Canada, Campbell continued,

is represented as a crude colony, whose literature, if it could be called by such a name, is merely associated with superficial canoe and carnival songs, backwoods and Indian tales told in poor rhyme, and all tied together by pseudo-patriotic hurrahs...<sup>100</sup>

He was of course right. Similarly, J.E. Wetherell, an Ontario teacher, school inspector and editor of textbooks, disliked the anthology. In a letter to Bliss Carman G.D. Roberts wrote, "Mr. J.E. Wetherell, M.A., the editor of Gage's College text books, is anxious to print a slim little volume of *Canadian poetry*, for use in High Schools & Colleges over Canada. He thinks Lighthall's *Songs of Gt. Dominion* unsuitable, as containing too much trash."<sup>101</sup> Yet this superficial and pseudo-

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<sup>100</sup> Barry Davies, ed., *At the Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott in the Globe*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) Dec 3, 1892, p. 203. Roy Daniels describes Campbell as having a "violent independence of spirit." See Roy Daniels, "Minor Poets, 1880-1920" in Carl F. Klinck, ed., *Literary History of Canada*, 2nd edition, vol 1, p 439

<sup>101</sup> Nov. 20, 1892 Laurel Boone, ed., *The Collected Letters of Charles G.D. Roberts*, (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1989) p 160

patriotic collection of trash remains a rich source of information on imperialism, on its "strenuous masculinity"<sup>102</sup> for example.

Imperialists were, fundamentally, nation builders. It was their duty, and duty was revered as a masculine ideal. Duty could be expressed in any number of ways, from death on the battle field, to clearing the forest, from opening up the west to running for political office. And it could be expressed to the Empire: the Empire will survive, Lighthall boldly asserted, "IF IT SETS CLEARLY BEFORE IT A DEFINITE IDEAL THAT MEN WILL SUFFER AND DIE FOR."<sup>103</sup> Yet whether duty meant going up the Nile in defence of the Empire or it meant hunting, fishing and tilling the soil, to answer the call of duty was to be a man. Referring to Canadian poets in general, Lighthall once stated that "Their chief star, however, the best of them are conscious, is *duty*— for with them is largely, and obviously, the making of a nation."<sup>104</sup> And referring to Charles G.D. Roberts in particular, Lighthall observed that his poetry was distinguished by its manliness and that "This manliness and dignity render him particularly fitted for the great work which Canada at present offers her sons and as he is only twenty-nine we hope to see his future a great one."<sup>105</sup> Similarly he wrote of Charles Mair, "The "North-West" poet is a manly figure."<sup>106</sup> Duty and manliness were synonymous, interchangeable terms. And so it is that *Songs of the Great Dominion* contains poem after poem celebrating duty, that virile and manly ideal. For example, Isabella Valancey Crawford wrote "Song of the Axe" which saw Max go dutifully into

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<sup>102</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p 144

<sup>103</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p xxiii

<sup>104</sup> Nov. 7, 1889 From a letter typed inside an autographed copy of *Songs of the Great Dominion* to the Scottish Society of Literature and Art in The Rufus Hathaway Collection of Canadian Literature, The University of New Brunswick.

<sup>105</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. xxv

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p 457

battle against a tree, "My axe and I— we do immortal tasks— / We build up nations— this my axe and I!"<sup>107</sup> Sarah Anne Curzon praised the loyalty and duty of the loyalists in her poem, "The Loyalists:" "O ye, who with your blood and sweat / watered the furrows of this land."<sup>108</sup> Mrs. M.J. Katzmann Lawson honoured "The loyal men who crossed the sea, and came with battle ring / To hold this free land of ours a province for their king"<sup>109</sup> in her poem, "The Battle of Grand Pré." And Agnes Machar, better known as "Fidelis," celebrated Canadian participation in imperial sorties: "For we have British hearts and British blood / That leaps up, eager, when the danger calls."<sup>110</sup>

I deliberately chose Crawford, Curzon, Katzmann Lawson and "Fidelis" as examples because they are at once representative and exceptional: representative because they revere duty and exceptional because they are women. Just as Lighthall's character, Alexandra Grant, subscribed to the masculine ideal so too did the women poets Lighthall included in his anthology. And just as Haviland was surprised at Alexandra's intelligence so too was Lighthall surprised at the strength of Canada's women poets. "One peculiar feature of [Canadian] literature is its strength in lady singers."<sup>111</sup> If Lighthall's initial response is revealing then his subsequent analysis is fascinating.

Verily one has not to read very far in that noble patriotic book, "Laura Secord," to acknowledge that Mrs. Sarah Anne Curzon writes with the power and spirit of masculinity. How these women sympathize with the pluck of the heroes!<sup>112</sup>

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107 *Ibid.*, p. 107

108 *Ibid.*, p. 253

109 *Ibid.*, p. 236

110 *Ibid.*, p. xxxiv

111 *Ibid.*, p. xxxii

112 *Ibem.*

Lighthall offered the same analysis of Annie Rothwell.

The best war songs of the late half-breed rebellion were written by Annie Rothwell, of Kingston, who had only a name for prose novels until the spirit of militarism was thus lit in her.<sup>113</sup>

The meaning is clear: only those women who write with "the power and spirit of masculinity" or who are moved by "the spirit of militarism" will be represented in what is in effect a masculine anthology.

Although women did tow the proverbial line just as hard and just as profoundly as men this did not guarantee them equal representation. In her article "Anthologies and the Canon of Early Canadian Women Writers" Carole Gerson starts from the premise that "What we teach in Canadian literature is largely determined by what appears in our anthologies, especially when we look at early writers who are otherwise out of print."<sup>114</sup> And since women are under-represented in anthologies they are therefore under-represented in the Can. Lit. canon. *Songs of the Great Dominion* is no exception. Of the fifty-six authors only fifteen are women, or twenty-seven per-cent. Statistical correlation is not in itself an explanation, after all given the limited opportunities for women in late nineteenth century Canada it is to be expected that there were more men writing. As Margaret Atwood once quipped, "In the nineteenth century a woman Canadian poet was the equivalent, say, of a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Inuit shaman."<sup>115</sup> But the conclusive evidence remains: Lighthall included only twenty-six poems by women, or sixteen per-cent, not twenty-seven per-cent.

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Carole Gerson, "Anthologies and the Canaon of Early Canadian Women Writers," in Lorraine McMullen, ed., *Nineteenth -Century Canadian Women Writers*, (Ottawa: Univeristé d'Ottawa, University of Ottawa, 1990) p 56

<sup>115</sup> Margaret Atwood, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982) p. xxix



Herein lies the under representation. Gerson argues, with sardonic conviction, that minor women poets were more minor than minor men poets.<sup>116</sup>

Similarly, Lighthall both included yet under-represented, even misrepresented, French poets. On the one hand imperialists romanticized and idealized what they perceived to be Quebec's history and traditional social order and, furthermore, imperialists argued that despite a difference of language both French and English Canadians were descendants of the same Nordic invaders and were continually being shaped by the same uplifting northern climate. On the other hand, however, they preferred to delude themselves than confront the fact that French Canada remained at the best of times dubious and at the worst of times hostile towards imperialism. *Songs of the Great Dominion* mirrors, exactly, this duality in both its structure and content. In the section titled "Voyageur and Habitant" Lighthall assembled a series of old *chansons* in translation, songs like "Malbrouck," "À la Claire Fontaine" and "Entre Paris et Saint Denis." "In the folksongs of the *habitant*," John Murray Gibbon wrote, "Lighthall felt that the best traditions of seventeenth century France were being preserved— love of music, warmth of sentiment, romance, pleasure in work (most of these folksongs as sung in Canada are worksongs), delight in the charms of nature."<sup>117</sup> Indeed, Lighthall described these songs as "medieval ballads" and as "embalmed."<sup>118</sup> Simply, the "old Chanson literature" embodied what the imperialist perceived: tradition, order, attachment to the land. Lighthall, therefore, placed it within the body of the anthology. It fit. In other words, the "old Chanson literature" fit because it proved the imperialist perception of Quebec.

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<sup>116</sup> Carole Gerson, "Anthologies and the Canon of Early Canadian Women Writers," p 58

<sup>117</sup> John Murray Gibbon, "William Douw Lighthall," p 109

<sup>118</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p xxxvi

Contemporary French writers, however, proved more problematic for Lighthall, in the same way that contemporary Quebec proved problematic for imperialism. "To omit a bow to the French would be ungracious," Lighthall admitted. "Forming about a fourth of the population," he continued, "they have a literature which within the last generation was much more fecund than the English, and contains remarkable writing."<sup>119</sup> Yet he could not include this writing within the body of the anthology. It would not fit. That is, contemporary French poetry would not fit in the anthology because contemporary Quebec would not fit in imperialism. And thus he created an appendix, "Leading Modern French-Canadian Poets." This appendix contained one "representative" poem each from Louis Honoré Fréchette, Pierre J.O. Chauveau, Benjamin Sulte and Pamphile Le May. Just as he chose women poets who stressed the virtues of imperialism he chose Fréchette and Le May as two French poets who, at least here, bought into the Rule Britannia element of imperialism. As a representative Fréchette poem Lighthall selected "Le Drapeau Anglais:" "C'est le drapeau de l'Angleterre... / Il flotte glorieusement."<sup>120</sup> Likewise, as a representative Le May poem he selected "Hosana" in which Le May "expresses chivalrous sentiments towards Queen Victoria."<sup>121</sup> As for Benjamin Sulte, he is of course better known as a historian who did not see the Conquest as necessarily evil but neither did he see Britain as necessarily good. Concomitantly, he wanted nothing to do with Britain and its imperial campaigns. "In a way," Serge Gagnon writes, "[Sulte's] ideal Canada anticipates Henri Bourassa's."<sup>122</sup> Lighthall chose to neglect this point. It was easier. And finally Pierre Chauveau: he was also a nationalist committed to Quebec culture

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 441

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443

<sup>122</sup> Serge Gagnon, *Quebec and its Historians: 1840-1920*, (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982) p. 101

and as his "representative" poem Lighthall chose "Donnacona," a tribute to Donnacona, the Native leader Cartier first encountered. Not surprisingly Lighthall conveniently ignored Chauveau's scathing indictment of the Act of Union which burdened Quebec with Ontario's debt. "C'est le jour des banquiers, demain sera notre heure. / Aujourd'hui l'oppression, demain la liberté."<sup>123</sup> To requote Carl Berger, imperialists suffered from "not a little blindness" when it came to Quebec

Ironically, Chauveau's poem "Donnacona" is similar to François-Xavier Garneau's "Le dernier Huron," a nationalist identification with a disappearing people, a victimized people. English Canadian nationalists, the imperialists, too identified with Native People although for quite different reasons. And this identification is valuable not for what it tells us about Native culture, which is nothing, but for what it tells us about English culture. As Gordon Johnston argues in his article, "An Intolerable Burden of Meaning: Native Peoples in White Fiction,"

The stories that white authors tell of Native peoples have, for the most part, been symbolic in nature. For Rousseau and countless others, Indian figures have been interesting, not in themselves, but as symbolic referents in a discourse about European civilization's virtues and vices, triumphs and failures.<sup>124</sup>

Margaret Atwood makes the same point about Canadian literature, "The Indians and Eskimos have rarely been considered in and for themselves; they are usually made into projections of something in white Canadian psyche, a fear or a wish."<sup>125</sup> The Native was Other, pure representation, without self-definition. In the late nineteenth, early twentieth century English Canada psyche the Native became a symbolic referant

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<sup>123</sup> Quote in Mason Wade, *The French Canadians, vol 1*, (Toronto Macmillan of Canada, 1968) p. 225

<sup>124</sup> Gordon Johnston, "An Intolerable Burden of Meaning Native Peoples in White Fiction," in T. King, C. Colver, H. Hay, eds, *The Native in Literature*, (Oakville ECW Press, 1987) p. 50

<sup>125</sup> Margaret Atwood, *Survival*, p. 91

in the discourse about fear and loathing in an increasingly modern, urban, industrial society and about the construction of a nationalism complete with native traditions.

The most obvious and recurring images were the Native Peoples as doomed and as nature's children. In the introduction to *Songs of the Great Dominion* Lighthall wrote that throughout the anthology we would hear, among other things, "the lament of vanishing races singing their death-song as they are swept on to the cataract of oblivion."<sup>126</sup> No subtlety in that. Indeed Lighthall included one of his own poems, "The Caughnawaga Beadwork-Seller," in which he tells the story of a Native woman who leaves the reserve to sell her beads in the city. Tired and alone she laments,

They are white men; we are Indians:  
What a gulf their stares proclaim!  
They are mounting; we are dying:  
All our heritage they claim.  
We are dying, dwindling, dying!<sup>127</sup>

Similarly, Lighthall included George Martin's poem, "Change On The Ottawa." Here Martin recounts how a "chief of the Algonquins" travelled down Ottawa river to look at what was once his "boyhood haunt" but is now the city of Montreal, where "Great wheels along the stream revolving large, / And swift machinery's whirr and clank and groan."

And once he looked around— Oh! so forlorn  
I hated for his sake the reckless tread  
Of human progress— on *his* race no morn.<sup>128</sup>

For both Lighthall and Martin the symbol of the doomed Native— crushed by "the reckless tread / Of human progress" and left aside as "[White men] are mounting up to

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<sup>126</sup> W D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p xxi

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41

heaven / And are pressing all around"<sup>129</sup>— refers not to the plight of the Native Peoples but to their own sense of loss. The concomitant of progress was the modern, urban, industrial experience or the loss of nature. And while Lighthall encouraged progress he remained anxious. "Is not modern life an insane rush— in the cities," he wrote to Cybel Wilkes in 1889.<sup>130</sup> And again he wrote, "One thing I judge about our modern life is its constant hurry."<sup>131</sup> Lighthall and Martin were not lone voices. To English culture, both in Canada and England, the Native Peoples embodied that original harmony, that community with nature. The review in *The Athenaeum* singled out Pauline Johnson as the most promising poet not because of her poetry but because she happened to be the daughter of a Mohawk chief. Roy Daniels writes that "Johnson's reputation would appear to be securely based, not on her poetry as such but on the need, felt in England at the turn of the century, for fresh contact with primitive and unspoiled life."<sup>132</sup> To sum up: the Native as doomed symbolized the English sense of loss and the Native as nature symbolized the English longing for the simple and primitive.

Furthermore, Native culture also provided those *native* traditions that the nationalist élite so desperately sought. Northrop Frye's argued that any claims to the land revealed not "the possession of the land, but precisely the absence of possession;" in a similar vein George Grant argued, "The roots of some communities in eastern North America go back far in continuous love for their place but none of us could be called autochthonous, because in all there is some consciousness of making

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49. From "The Caughnawaga Beadwork-Seller."

<sup>130</sup> Feb. 13, 1889 *Lighthall Papers*, 23/4

<sup>131</sup> Dec. 21, 1889 *Lighthall Papers*, 23/5

<sup>132</sup> Roy Daniels, "Minor Poets, 1880-1920," p. 442. Lighthall was particularly interested in Johnson's career and in 1907 he gave her fifty dollars in order that she be able to continue her speaking tour of England. April 17, 1907 *Lighthall Papers*, 1/19

the land our own."<sup>133</sup> And this is precisely why national elites, who were attempting to construct national myths, a home and native land, had such a profound interest in Native culture.

What is enviable in the Native people, then, from a nationalistic point of view, is their autochthonous claim to the land. Native people also possess all other traits so important, in Romantic terms, to a great literature: an indigenous language and mythology, and a past filled with heroic deeds.<sup>134</sup>

As Charles Mair once wrote to Lighthall, "To ["the average White"] the Indian has no past. And yet such a past!"<sup>135</sup> To this end, towards the mining of Native culture for an indigenous mythology and heroic deeds, Lighthall included in *Songs of the Great Dominion* several Native songs in translation and Native legends as retold by English poets such as Charles Sangster's "Taapookaa: A Huron Legend," G.D. Roberts' "The Departing of Clote Scarp," and H.R.A. Pocock's eight page poem, "The Legend of Thunder." Also included is De Mille's poem, "The Indian Names of Acadia,"

The memory of the Red Man,  
How can it pass away,  
While his names of music linger  
On each mount and stream and bay?<sup>136</sup>

As Leslie Monkman maintains, "aboriginal place names are reminders of an original harmony that has been eroded or lost."<sup>137</sup> Simply, to appropriate Native culture and to make it part of Canadian culture was to realize what Lighthall termed "The great

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<sup>133</sup> George Grant, "In Defence of North America," in *A Passion for Identity*, p. 182

<sup>134</sup> Margery Fee, "Romantic Nationalism and the Image of Native People in Contemporary English Canadian Literature," in *The Native in Literature*, p. 17

<sup>135</sup> Jan. 22, 1909. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/21

<sup>136</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. 285

<sup>137</sup> Leslie Monkman, *A Native Heritage Images of the Indian in English Canadian Literature*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981) p. 34

refrain, "A Native Land!" And this is precisely what Lighthall attempted to do in his third and final novel, *The Master of Life*.

Although published in 1909 *The Master of Life* represents a synthesis of Lighthall's thinking. It is neither new nor a break with his earlier attitudes. *The Master of Life* traces the story of Hiawatha and his efforts and ultimate success to form the Iroquois confederacy; it is, to quote Lighthall, "an aboriginal romance without a white man in it."<sup>138</sup> Again, the novel tells us nothing about Native culture but it is interesting for what it tells us about Lighthall and English culture. Lighthall suffered from Native envy: he worshipped the idea of being native and he worshipped Hiawatha in the noble savage tradition. Heroic. Courageous. Wise. A natural leader. At one with nature. And possessing remarkable physical prowess. Indeed, these were the qualities that Lighthall sought for himself and admired in others. In a letter to Cybel Wilkes he lamented the weakness that he saw in the world, "there is much despairing, melancholy and whining." What he admired was "grim strength and confidence" which he thought was synonymous with the noble savage. "I like," he wrote, "a strain of the noble savage in men."<sup>139</sup> Yet, and this is fascinating, the noble savage, besides having to be all of the above, had also to be white. "A very common indicator that projection of white values is taking place," Gordon Johnston writes,

is the appearance of the "exceptional native," one supposedly far in advance of his tribe in terms of manners or intelligence or sensitivity. Such a native is doomed, like Uncas, as the last of a noble race or is the forerunner, like Hiawatha, of the virtues of white civilization.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Master of Life*, (Montreal, 1909) p. v

<sup>139</sup> April 20, 1889. *Lighthall Papers*, 23/4

<sup>140</sup> Gordon Johnston, "An Intolerable Burden of Meaning: Native Peoples in White Fiction," p. 53

And so it is that Lighthall's Hiawatha is very white-identified: he is diplomatic, a "statesman;"<sup>141</sup> he is logical, "the figure of the thinker, sunk in meditation;"<sup>142</sup> and he is a divine prophet, a Moses.<sup>143</sup> At one point Lighthall described how Hiawatha commanded awe, "the awe due to a White One."<sup>144</sup> And in an 1898 essay titled "Hiawatha The Great" he called Hiawatha the Christ of his race. Lighthall appropriated the story of Hiawatha from Native culture for Canadian culture and in the process Hiawatha was transformed into a white hero for white Canada.

Nature, it should now be clear, was an important and complex theme in Canada's nascent literature. The Native embodied nature and represented English Canada's longing for it and yet, as Haviland's death betrays, English Canada had not reconciled itself completely with nature. Not surprisingly the largest section in *Songs of the Great Dominion* is titled "Seasons." And here again Lighthall selected poems which expressed, self-consciously, the imperialist ethos: nature was inspirational, Canada had a varied climate and that winters were not cruel but uplifting. Eli Mandel condemns Lighthall's association of environment and national character as "vulgar sociology."<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, Northrop Frye's argues in "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology," that the Confederation poets wrote their best poetry not when they were writing celebrations to nature but when they were overwhelmed by "the indifference

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<sup>141</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Master of Life*, p. 5

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149

<sup>145</sup> Eli Mandel, ed., *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, (Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1971) p 5. The association of climate and character is already well documented by historians. But one more example cannot hurt. The following quote by Blackburn Harte of the *Toronto Mail* reveals the connection between nature and literary excellence. "The great American novelist may after all come from the north. And why not? What better inspiration can be wished for than the mysticism of the illimitable pine woods, the roar of the rapids, and the invigorating blast of a Canadian north wind?" *Dominion Illustrated*, Jan. 18, 1890, vol. iv, no. 81, p. 38



of nature to human values," "when they are darkest in tone, most preoccupied with pain, loss, loneliness, or waste."<sup>146</sup> Of course Lighthall did not include this poetry: it would have rained on his imperialist parade. Indeed, Lighthall went to great lengths to point out the charms and beauty of the Canadian landscape and climate. In the introduction he revered Canada and "her coasts and gulfs and kingdoms and islands, on the Atlantic on one side, and the Pacific on the other; her four thousand-mile panorama of noble rivers, wild forests, ocean-like prairies; her towering snow-capped Rockies waking to the tints of sunrise in the West."<sup>147</sup> The Canadian climate, moreover, was equally diverse ("In British Columbia...roses sometimes bloom out of doors in January,"<sup>148</sup>) and even more sublime. "Winter is not perpetual," he waxed, "but merely in most parts somewhat long. It does not strike the inhabitants as intolerably severe. It is the season of most of their enjoyments...and the clear nights and diamond days are sparkingly beautiful."<sup>149</sup> "Seasons" thus contains poems from Arhibald Lampman's "Heat" to G.D. Roberts' "To Winter." The Montreal *Daily Witness* review appropriately dubbed the poets in *Songs of the Great Dominion*, "the high priests of nature."<sup>150</sup>

*Songs of the Great Dominion* was, and still is, an important document in Canadian cultural history. Indeed, Coles Publishing Company republished it in 1971. And in his essay "Canadian Anthologies, New and Old," A.J.M. Smith described Lighthall's introductory essay as,

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<sup>146</sup> Northrop Frye, "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology," in Eli Mandel, ed., *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, p. 189

<sup>147</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Songs of the Great Dominion*, p. xxii

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> July 20, 1889, Montreal *Daily Witness* *Lighthall Papers*, 12/5

one of the most eloquent statements in all the pages of Canadian literature of that superabundant optimism and energy which hurled two parallel railways across the prairies and through the Rockies and sent Canadian troopers to die on the banks of the Nile. It is a remarkable piece of prose...<sup>151</sup>

Lighthall both intended to, and succeeded in, producing a monument to imperialism. And today *Songs of the Great Dominion* continues to offer insight into the imperialist ethos: its optimism; its hopes; its idealism; its masculinity; its willingness to accommodate women so long as they displayed a "power and spirit of masculinity;" its frustrated attempts to include Quebec; and its attempts to appropriate Native culture and call it their own. But as much as he hoped his anthology would stoke the fire of patriotism Lighthall also knew that more direct action was required. And so he founded the Society of Canadian Literature.

#### IV

In response to Lighthall's invitation to be an honorary member of the Society of Canadian Literature James Barr, an expatriate living in the United States and editor of the anthology *American Humour*, was at once flippant and serious. "Although I owe Canada nothing but a bad bringing up and rheumatism," he wrote, "still I have a most unaccountable love for the country—the sort of love a child must have for its drunken but good-natured shiftless parent—a kind of it-would-reform-what-a-grand-country-it-would-be." Barr then congratulated Lighthall for his efforts "to graft a literary soul into that unpatriotic hulk," "anything tending to its reform I delight to see."<sup>152</sup> Indeed, the Society of Canadian Literature was nothing if not a *sober and good-natured* organization.

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<sup>151</sup> A J M. Smith, "Canadian Anthologies New and Old," in A J M. Smith, *On Poetry and Poets*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) p. 6

<sup>152</sup> Sept. 5, 1890. *Lighthall Papers*, 1/6

Like all of Lighthall's literary projects the founding of the Society of Canadian Literature in late 1888, early 1889 had its inspiration in patriotism. "It is not as generally known as it should be," Lighthall stated, "that a considerable quantity of beautiful and interesting writing has been produced in Canada, an acquaintance with which would add to our interest and hope in our country"<sup>153</sup> Art not for art's sake, art for Canada's sake. Against this backdrop stood the objects of the Society:

an examination of our national literature, English and French, the acquirement and diffusion of a knowledge of our best poetry, romance, historic works, and other writing; the provision of a centre for local literary life and for the introduction of visiting *littérateurs*, and the encouragement of all proper literary works and movements throughout the country.<sup>154</sup>

Unfortunately Lighthall did not define what exactly he meant by "proper literary works" nonetheless the Society did achieve these objects during its short life even if it did not in the end "graft a literary soul into that unpatriotic hulk." The Society held its first meeting on January 23, 1889 at the Fraser Institute in Montreal. No alcohol would be permitted. But women were allowed.<sup>155</sup> And John Reade gave a very proper lecture on "The Development of Canadian Literature." For the next three months the Society met on a regular basis to discuss such proper subjects as "Mrs. Moodie," "Thomas Chandler Haliburton," "Louis Honoré Fréchette," "Octave Crémazie," and on April 22, the final meeting of the 1889 season, Lighthall gave an equally proper talk on William Kirby. It was also during the 1889 season that the Society achieved its object of introducing visiting *littérateurs* when Douglas Sladen—Australia's answer to Charles G.D. Roberts—addressed the February 11 meeting. "An

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<sup>153</sup> From the Society of Canadian Literature circular Jan 17, 1889 *Lighthall Papers*, 3/12

<sup>154</sup> From the program to the 1889 season *Lighthall Papers*, 2/6

<sup>155</sup> From the contract with the Fraser Institute and from the program to the 1889 season respectively.

Australian, English poet and general literateur, Dougals Sladen, has been here and proved very interesting," Lighthall wrote to Cybel Wilkes. "We have been having altogether somewhat an intellectual revival lately."<sup>156</sup>

Lighthall did not want to limit the Society of Canadian Literature to Montreal, he wanted to encourage this intellectual revival across the country. He therefore had printed Certificates of Membership which he sent to several Canadian writers, including: G.D. Roberts, Charles Sangster, William Kirby, Pierre J O. Chauveau, Louis Fréchette and Alexander McLachlan. He also invited the famous American historian of French Canada, Francis Parkman, to be a member. William Francis Butler, author of travel books and adventure stories, wrote, "My most sincere thanks for the honour they [the Society of Canadian Literature] have conferred upon me by election of membership in a society which hopes to preserve the glorious traditions of Canadian History, and to develop and foster Canadian Literature."<sup>157</sup> F. Hunter Duvar, a Prince Edward Island Poet, wrote to Lighthall on March 4, 1889 in order to vent his regional frustration. "A number of us here on the sea have lost all awe of the RSC [the Royal Society of Canada]." The Royal Society of Canada at that point would be better described as the Royal Society of Central Canada.<sup>158</sup> "Could and would you kindly favour me with any prospectus of the Society of Canadian Literature." And as

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<sup>156</sup> Feb. 13, 1889. *Lighthall Papers*, 23/4

<sup>157</sup> Feb. 20, 1890 *Lighthall Papers*, 2/6

<sup>158</sup> Lighthall was always concerned that the Royal Society of Canada not be the Royal Society of Central Canada. On March 2, 1917 he wrote to Duncan Campbell Scott, then Honourary Secretary, "Examining the Royal Society of Canada nominations, I think the Ontario men ought to be careful not to give the whole society the reproach of being an Ontario affair. Out of the twenty-seven proposers of candidates, twenty-one are of Ontario. .Of nine candidates, six are from Ontario. Of three names recommended, two are from Ontario...It is obviously a tendency to be avoided for the present. The Prairie provinces seem to be the most neglected ." (PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol 4, Royal Society of Cdn. Lit., n.d., 1891, 1903-1917 )

a biting conclusion Duvar demanded, "Is the guild open to Maritime men?"<sup>159</sup> It was and Lighthall saw to it that Duvar was made an honorary member. Because the Society met only in Montreal the *Dominion Illustrated* kept other Canadians informed: it printed Lighthall's talk on William Kirby, it reported and quoted from G.D. Roberts' address and it printed, in part, Lighthall's lecture titled "The First Canadian Novel."<sup>160</sup>

The Society of Canadian Literature lived a very brief life. It had only two seasons, 1889 and 1890, before Lighthall, "recognizing that their objects are very much in harmony,"<sup>161</sup> merged it with the Society for Historical Studies also of Montreal. But that it existed at all, that it printed programs, sent out certificates and held meetings further indicates Lighthall's tireless duty to Canadian nationalism through Canadian literature.

In an 1897 essay, "The Conditions of a Colonial Literature," Lighthall declared that Canadian literature at last contained "the hopes and emotions of the new patriotism." Always the imperialist he was quick to add, "the national sentiment now formed in the Great Dominion is not antagonistic but complementary to the Imperial."<sup>162</sup> Indeed, Lighthall captured the Confederation school of poetry: full of national hope but not national independence. And Lighthall himself embodied Canada's first literary movement: he eschewed confrontation while seeking consensus; he avoided the contentious while celebrating the romantic; and he ignored class conflict while

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<sup>159</sup> March 4, 1889. *Lighthall Papers*, 3/11

<sup>160</sup> *Dominion Illustrated*, May 11, 1889 vol II, no 45, p. 298, June 1, 1889, vol. II, no. 48, p. 342; Jan. 11, vol. IV, no. 80 p 31

<sup>161</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 3/13

<sup>162</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Conditions of a Colonial Literature," *Transactions R.S.C.*, vol. xix, part iv, 1897

pretending that all was just in society. Carole Gerson argues that this was the "primary significance" of Canada's writers. "Against the constant threat of American cultural domination, Victorian Canada's continual reaffirmation that its national literature should be patriotic and ameliorative, based on the models of Shakespeare and Scott, reflected the conviction of a colonial society that in cultural affairs, nationhood would be achieved only by transplanting the most admirable traditions of the Old World to the New."<sup>163</sup> In 1897, therefore, Lighthall could look back and be proud of his contributions to Canada's survival: in a period of only a few years he published both a collection of poetry and a novel, he edited an important anthology of poetry and he organized Canada's first national literary society. Although Lighthall would maintain a life-long interest in the development of a Canadian literature nothing would equal his energy and commitment of the late 1880s. However, he was no less dedicated to what he termed Canada's national development. And in 1897 he began what would become a twenty year crusade: as a newly appointed member of the Westmount City Council Lighthall soon found himself a champion of municipal rights and an active urban reformer. Although the transformation from Confederation poet to municipal politician seems odd it actually makes logical sense: as poet and politician he was only doing what he thought was his duty. Besides, he was never a very good poet. And, at the turn of the century, the nation demanded that he turn his energy towards what was going on in the cities.

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<sup>163</sup> Carole Gerson, *A Purer Taste*, p. 154

Chapter III

*Lighthall the Urban Reformer*

In an 1889 letter to his then fiancée, Cybel Wilkes, Lighthall described the sort of life he wanted to lead. Fancying himself somewhat of a Henry David Thoreau he wrote,

Can we all not live a gentler life in this modern civilization of ours. I should like to live in some country place, near town, very simply— with water in front and a little bit of lawn and trees or bushes, if I had it all my own way, and would gladly retire on a very small allowance and work in works of thought and public movements. Is it visionary?<sup>1</sup>

Lighthall never pursued his dream of an arcadian retreat: even as he wrote the forces of urbanization, industrialization and immigration were together transforming both Canada and the role of the intellectual. Faced with the very real possibility of irrelevancy in an increasingly complex society the intellectual moved out of the ivory tower and into the community. "[T]he significant trend of the age," argues Doug Owsram, "was towards a new coalition of activist intellectuals who sought both to assess the needs of modern society and to advocate solutions."<sup>2</sup> Never one to miss a trend Lighthall found himself not leading the romantic life of a detached philosopher king but rather he found himself directly involved in that movement to assess Canada's needs and to advocate solutions. During his twenty year involvement in Canada's reform movement Lighthall tackled such giants as the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Co. and founded the Union of Canadian Municipalities, today the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities. In the end, however, both Lighthall's assessment of society's needs and the solutions he advocated were essentially

<sup>1</sup> Jan. 19, 1889. *Lighthall Papers*, 23/4

<sup>2</sup> Doug Owsram, *The Government Generation, Canadian Intellectuals and the State 1900-1945*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) p. x

conservative and often repressive. His imperialist/idealist leanings precluded anything even remotely radical.

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"I want you, my municipal bretheren of Canada, to bear with me while I say a few words to you on this, to me, rather solemn day of my retirement, for to me it is the completion of what I consider a chapter of my life's work."<sup>3</sup> So began Lighthall's Valedictory Address before the Union of Canadian Municipalities in 1919, an address which at once summarized both his own twenty year involvement in urban reform and the urban reform movement which swept across the nation at the turn of the century. With marvellous rhetorical flourish Lighthall recounted his trials and tribulations with the "charter sharks" and monopolists; he talked about his defeats and victories in the battle for control of the streets; and he outlined a route that the Union ought to follow if it was to continue to be effective in the future. The most striking feature of Lighthall's address, however, is its urgency: the fight for urban reform was nothing less than a confrontation between good and evil. "If money and wrong were inevitably to succeed," he announced, "it was clear that all our commercial and public life would sink into a festering bog of corruption."<sup>4</sup> And even worse than a festering bog of corruption, "the triumph of corrupt money...would with logical certainty lead to what is now called Bolshevism, unless the forces of right and order could meanwhile find a remedy."<sup>5</sup> Yet, his vivid imagery and dire predictions notwithstanding, Lighthall's so-called remedy was remarkably conservative: reform in order to preserve. To this

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<sup>3</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Valedictory," August 1919. Reprinted in Paul Rutherford, ed., *Shaping The Canadian City: the first phase, 1880-1920*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) p. 74

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75



end he listed the following axioms as the principles which had acted as his guide in the fight for urban reform.

1. The Canadian people shall not be ruled by any irresponsible monopoly.
2. They shall not submit to methods of fraud or corruption.
3. There shall be no perpetual franchises.
4. Our heritage of natural resources affecting municipalities must not be sold, but leased, if not publically operated.
5. One generation cannot legislate away the rights of another.
6. Municipalities must control their streets.
7. Each Canadian shall have a fair deal from all who are granted corporate or other public privileges
8. Some court or council must always exist free and equipped to enforce the fair deal.
9. The life of the poorest citizen must be made worth living, through his share of the best civic conditions and services.<sup>6</sup>

The above is hardly a call to revolution or a manifesto for radical social change. To demand that Canadians not submit to fraud and corruption is, after all, far from contentious. Lighthall's list is in the end a conservative agenda for social cohesion and order.

Moreover, Lighthall's list very much embodies the values and principles of Canada's urban reform movement which emerged around the turn of the century, a time when the changes to Canada's social and economic fabric were occurring at remarkable rate— a rate Lighthall described as "far too rapid for best efficiency."<sup>7</sup> The population of Montreal, for example, more than doubled between 1891 and 1911. Even Lighthall's Westmount experienced a remarkable growth: between 1890 and 1909 its population increased more than six-fold from 1 895 to 13 000. Accompanying Canada's urban explosion was an industrial explosion: new factories, roads, railways, mills and mines ushered in the era of modern industry. Immigration was yet another source of disconcerting consternation: how would Canada

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74

accommodate so many 'strangers within her gates?' By as early as the 1890s newspapers, magazines, Royal Commissions and books like Herbert Ames' *City Below the Hill* were carrying story after story of inner city woe into 'the homes of Canada's middle and upper classes. Simply, the city above the hill could not avoid the city below the hill.

Within the city above the hill, Canada's middle and upper classes, there was a pervading sense of anxiety. Doug Owsram writes that, "Society seemed to be, as the phrase of the time went, in an 'unstable stage,' and the consequences of that instability were as yet uncertain."<sup>8</sup> And S.E.D. Shortt writes that many Victorians who found themselves "staring into the abyss of what they considered social and moral chaos, recoiled in terror."<sup>9</sup> For a generation that had grown up in nineteenth century Canada, with its convictions and certainties, twentieth century Canada offered uneasy confusion. George Munro Grant captured the anxiety of his generation when in 1901 he asked, "What kind of nation is it to be? Is it to be a huge "city of pigs," to use Plato's phrase; or is it to be a land of high-souled men and women?"<sup>10</sup> He was not hopeful. Nor was Lighthall. Recall that as early as 1889 Lighthall was beginning to feel the pressures of what he termed "modern life." "Is not modern life an insane rush in the cities,"<sup>11</sup> he asked Cybel Wilkes. And several months later he wrote, "One thing I judge about our modern life is its constant hurry."<sup>12</sup> From here things only got worse. In 1903 Lighthall observed the rise of materialism, "all our jabber about the practical, and our running after millions, and of this or that mark of

<sup>8</sup> Doug Owsram, *The Government Generation*, p 22

<sup>9</sup> S.E.D. Shortt, *The Search for an Ideal, Six Canadian intellectuals and their convictions in an age of transition 1890-1930*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) p. 3

<sup>10</sup> Quote in Doug Owsram, *The Government Generation*, p. 15

<sup>11</sup> Feb 13, 1889. *Lighthall Papers*, 23/4

<sup>12</sup> Dec. 21, 1889. *Lighthall Papers*, 23/5

place and position."<sup>13</sup> Later he complained that the educated and privileged, society's natural leaders, were shirking their obligations. "This lack of sense of obligation towards Societies and other movements is very serious in Canada."<sup>14</sup> Moreover Canadian literature had ceased "in its true mission— to serve the Canadian ideal."<sup>15</sup> "I would attribute this," he later wrote, "to the excessive absorption of our people in the race for wealth, and consequently little diffusion of public spirit and interest."<sup>16</sup> And finally there was the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe who, according to popular racial theories, were neither able to understand nor participate in democracy. "Changes are now taking place with the growth of our great cities through the introduction of masses of ignorant foreigners," Lighthall once wrote, "and these doubtless will bring us face to face with new evils."<sup>17</sup> That Lighthall wrote *The Master of Life* in the early 1900s is far from coincidental. As the story of Hiawatha before the arrival of European culture it is his most idealistic novel and, among other things, represents his increasing anxiety in an increasingly urban and industrial world. It is an ironic paradox that Canada's long awaited boom, that the century that was to belong to Canada, would cause so much anxiety.

In response to and emerging out of this anxiety was the urban reform movement. As Lighthall said in March of 1900, even though the urban ills of 'drink,' vice, crime

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<sup>13</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Archibald Lampman's Canada," *The Horizon*, Jan 1903, *Lighthall Papers*, Collected Pamphlets. *The Horizon* was Lighthall's own newspaper. He published only one edition.

<sup>14</sup> May 15, 1908. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 4, file RS of Cdn Lit., n.d., 1891, 1903-1917

<sup>15</sup> Dec. 15, 1906. *Lighthall Papers*, 4/1

<sup>16</sup> Dec. 11, 1909. *Lighthall Papers*, 4/4 In this same letter Lighthall also observed that, "Twenty years ago we had a wave of better production and better promise, so far as ideas and principles were concerned. Some day we may have another wave "

<sup>17</sup> March 23, 1908. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol 1, file 19

and poverty were "weakly rooted" the time to act was now, "before the morning of Canada is spent."<sup>18</sup> Indeed, there were numerous leagues, unions and societies marching under the banner of urban reform and dedicated to causes ranging from temperance to clean municipal government, and from fighting prostitution to winning the vote for women. Although seemingly disparate and disorganized the reform movement was in point of fact a unified movement: the reformers themselves came from a common background and shared a common vision of what society ought to be. By and large the reform movement consisted of men and women from Canada's well educated, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant élite, an élite that saw individualism as the breakdown of order and saw society as a "cohesive organic community bound together by an enveloping web of shared moral and social values."<sup>19</sup> Paul Rutherford argues that these commonalities meant that the first wave of urban reform was very much "a gigantic experiment in social engineering, the aim of which was to make the city "a paradise of new-middle-class rationality."<sup>20</sup>

It is tempting therefore to hold Lighthall in contempt, to dismiss him as just one more member of the élite out to impose his morals on the rest of society and to further his own economic and social interests while hiding behind the veil of reform. But this would be too simplistic, too reductionist an argument. Action results from a complex nexus of values and attitudes. And yet historians of urban reform in Canada, influenced by American scholars such as Samuel P. Hays, have employed the argument of self-interest. Indeed, much of the historiography of urban reform can be reduced to the simple tale of self-interest. In an important article titled "The Politics of

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<sup>18</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Rights of Children," *The Educational Record of the Province of Quebec*, vol. xx, no 3, March 1900

<sup>19</sup> Paul Boyer Quoted in Carol Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918*, (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1983) p. 10

<sup>20</sup> Paul Rutherford ed., *Saving the Canadian City*, introduction, p. xx

Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," Hays argued convincingly that: "Available evidence indicates that the source of support for reform in municipal government did not come from the lower or middle classes, but from the upper class. The leading business groups in each city and professional men closely allied with them initiated and dominated municipal movements."<sup>21</sup> From here it is a short jump to the conclusion that this upper class élite acted out of self-interest. For example, Gilbert Stelter and Alan Artibise write: "Reformers went about their tasks motivated by a high degree of self-interest; they were intent on manipulating the urban environment as much for their own benefit as for any desire to help others."<sup>22</sup> And John Weaver, in his often cited article, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited: A Critical Assessment of Urban Reform in Canada, 1890-1920," maintains that,

The claim that reformers felt compelled to regulate the city for the benefit of all is simply not accurate. Instead, the regulatory impulse, with its counter productive and unpleasant implications, must be viewed as stemming as much from prejudice, self-interest and a concern for property values as from idealism and vision.<sup>23</sup>

Although the jump from the élite of society to self-interest is short it is also precarious for it assumes a necessary link between experience, identity and interest.

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," in Alexander B. Callow, ed., *American Urban History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) p. 424

<sup>22</sup> Gilbert Stelter and Alan Artibise, eds., *The Canadian City*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) p. 338

<sup>23</sup> John Weaver, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited: A Critical Assessment of Urban Reform in Canada, 1890-1920," in Gilbert Stelter and Alan Artibise, eds., *The Canadian City*, p. 408-409. See also John Weaver, "Elitism and the Corporate Ideal. Businessmen and Boosters in Canadian Civic Reform, 1890-1920," in A R McCormack and Ian MacPherson, eds., *Cities in the West*, (Western Canada Urban History Conference, 1974) For an example of the impact of Weaver's conception of reform see Jon Caulfield, "'Reform'" as a Chaotic Concept. The Case of Toronto," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire Urbaine* vol xvii, no 2, Oct 1988.

Joan Wallach Scott theorizes that "'interest" does not inhere in actors or their structural positions but is discursively produced."<sup>24</sup>

The answer to the question, what motivated Lighthall to take up the cause of urban reform, is to be found in the discourses of imperialism and Christian idealism, by the turn of the century the social gospel movement. Carl Berger writes that "the relationship between imperialism and social reform was intimate and direct."<sup>25</sup> On the direct level the Empire was only as strong as its individual members; and Canada's imperialists did not want Canada to be the weak link in "the chain welding the Empire together," to use David Ross McCord's phrase.<sup>26</sup> Take for example the Society for the Protection of Women and Children. In a letter to Governor General Aberdeen the Society observed with deep regret "that for minor girls, who are without expectations and without guardians, adequate protection against defilement is made to cease at fourteen." The Society therefore demanded that the age of consent be raised to sixteen, "which may now be regarded as the minimum age of civilized decency." Not to act was tantamount to refusing "fulfilment of the honorable obligations of Empire."<sup>27</sup> The obligation to keep Canada's virgin daughters chaste was an obligation of Empire. Lighthall could not have agreed more. In an essay titled "Canada and the Empire" he argued that the duty to one's city was part of one's duty to the Empire.

There is something attractive to our sentiment of duty and loyalty in our city; there is a place for our duty and loyalty in our province and a great place for them towards our Canada, but none of these spheres

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<sup>24</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) p 5

<sup>25</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 177

<sup>26</sup> McCord Museum of Canadian History. *McCord Family Papers*, Historical Notebook, vol. 4, p 158

<sup>27</sup> Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Montreal, April 1896. McCord Museum of Canadian History Library

excludes the glorious Empire we all inherit with its world-wide fraternity and high traditions.<sup>28</sup>

But as Berger points out the relationship between imperialism and social reform was not necessarily explicit and direct; it also existed on an implicit and intimate level.

Concurrent with imperialism was Christian idealism, a discourse which stressed the moral and inalienable obligation of the individual to the community. "The Supreme Ethical Principle," Lighthall maintained, "is that the feeling subject as individual is to subserve himself entirely to the Universal Feeling Subject."<sup>29</sup> Society was more than an agglomeration of rugged individuals. Around the turn of the century Christian idealism evolved into the social gospel movement: "Canadian society was changing so rapidly by the early twentieth century that the tenets of idealism seemed less and less plausible as an answer to the problems confronting man."<sup>30</sup> The social gospel movement shared the idealist conception of society but sought a more activist, interventionist role. Arguing that Christianity was essentially a social religion the social gospel movement emphasized the salvation of society over individual salvation. In an increasingly complex and opaque society Christianity's mission became the moral betterment of society, a mission not unlike the imperialist mission of civilizing the world's more backward races and bringing them into the fold of humanity.<sup>31</sup> As an imperialist and idealist Lighthall was naturally attracted to the social gospel

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<sup>28</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Canada and Empire," 1911. *Lighthall Papers*, 12/18. In an address to the 1910 annual meeting of the UCM Lighthall stated, "We are not merely citizens of our city or township, but servants of a great people, builders of a great empire, and standard-bearers of humanity." *Municipal Journal*, vol. vi, no. 10, October 1910, p. 387

<sup>29</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Sketch of a New Utilitarianism," p. 14. See also chapter one, part II of this thesis.

<sup>30</sup> Doug O'wram, *The Government Generation*, p. 14

<sup>31</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the natural affinity between the social gospel and imperialism see Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, pp. 183-186. See also Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. xlix, no. 4, 1968

movement. In a 1903 speech titled "The Citizenship of the Pastor," Lighthall argued that changes to Canada's social and economic order demanded the active participation of the clergy.

Pursuers of wealth will cast aside the welfare of people and the public honor and honesty. Bad systems will seek to entrench themselves and govern. Good men will be roused to save and elevate. Are the soldiers of Christ to fail us in this great campaign?...

The business of the pastor is to labour unceasingly to bring about the kingdom of heaven—the beautiful world of the Christian ideal of love and righteousness.<sup>32</sup>

Salem Bland could not have said it any better himself.

Despite Lighthall's penchant for colourful rhetoric, statements such as "Pursuers of wealth will cast aside the welfare of people" must not be confused with radicalism. "The ideals of the Social Gospel had been translated by Montreal's upper classes to mean that they had a duty to protect the "weaker elements in society" from themselves and other less scrupulous elements, and to try and elevate them from their state of moral degeneracy."<sup>33</sup> Lighthall, therefore, never called for a fundamental or even moderate re-orientation of society, of the economic order or of the relationship between labour and capital. He was conservative to the core. Lighthall's aversion to change is ironically revealed in his support for the suffrage movement. On the surface Lighthall's support for women's suffrage seems quite daring, that he was willing to alter the social order along lines of gender equality. In point of fact it was a conservative gesture precisely because Canada's suffrage movement was a conservative movement, a movement which stressed the family and

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<sup>32</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Citizenship of the Pastor," March 17, 1903 *Lighthall Papers*, 3/29

<sup>33</sup> D.J. Russell, "H.B. Ames as Municipal Reformer," (McGill University: Unpublished Master's Thesis, 1972) p. 130



the role of women in the family.<sup>34</sup> When Anna Lyman, a Montreal suffragette, wrote to Lighthall in request of his support he replied with the following and fascinating letter.

I heartily agree that comradeship should be the principle of co-operation between men and women in their public as well as private relations...On several points I am clear: 1st. that what is possible in educated communities is not to be readily accepted as so workable in those of rudimentary education; 2nd. in all Canadian communities women should have the same suffrage as men in municipal matters; 3rd. and also in provincial matters; 4th. in Dominion matters, where war and peace and diplomacy, militia and navy are concerned, I am not so clear; 5th. Pankhurstism is an abomination.<sup>35</sup>

Lighthall supported women suffrage only in so far as it did not upset the social order. Thus he was not able to support suffrage at the Dominion level: the so-called important matter of international relations must remain a male bastion. His reference to Pankhurstism is even more revealing. The Pankhursts, Emmeline and her two daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, led the militant suffrage movement in Britain. Their militancy combined with their demands for a change in the male-female relationship were a shock to Lighthall's very ordered and structured universe.<sup>36</sup>

Not only was Lighthall conservative, he was also élitist. Recall that in his letter to Anna Lyman he argued "that what is possible in educated communities is not to be readily accepted as so workable in those of rudimentary education." He once stated that Westmount was a necessarily better managed municipality than those "where the forces making for advance have had to contend with masses with less education and

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<sup>34</sup> See Carol Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred*.

<sup>35</sup> Nov. 8, 1913. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 1, file 25

<sup>36</sup> Lighthall was not alone in his distaste for the Pankhursts. Writes Carol Bacchi, "Given the temperate nature of the suffrage majority, it is not surprising that the British militants attracted few supporters in Canada" *Liberation Deferred*, p. 34

less business experience."<sup>37</sup> Lighthall very much believed in an élite leadership, a leadership based on training, education and birth. Concomitant to an élite leadership was an organic populace deferent to authority. Chamilly Haviland, the young seigneur, and his very paternalistic relationship with "his people"<sup>38</sup> typify Lighthall's ideal social order. Predictably, Lighthall did not support organized labour's demands for an end to property qualifications on the right to vote and on the right to run for office: to broaden the base of democracy would be to subject society to the will of the uneducated and untrained masses.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Lighthall was an adamant supporter of the Board of Control, a system of municipal government which ended the ward system and instituted the city wide election of board members. Lighthall believed that this system of government would attract a higher quality candidate who thought of the city's general good; the ward system, after all, necessarily attracted a "smaller type of man"<sup>40</sup> who looked out only for his ward. In short, the Board of Control would guarantee the natural right of "the poor and weak citizen to the faithful service of the rich and strong."<sup>41</sup> However, in the end it entrenched the administration of the city into the hands of a few well-to-do men who believed they knew what was best and further distanced the citizen and city hall.<sup>42</sup> The Board of Control is an example of

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<sup>37</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Westmount: A Municipal Illustration," in S Morley Wickett, ed., *Municipal Government in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1907) p. 28

<sup>38</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *The Young Seigneur*, p. 6

<sup>39</sup> To vote in Quebec a man had to own property worth at least 300 dollars ; to run for the mayoralty of Montreal a candidate had to own 10 000 dollars of property, an alderman needed at least 2 000.

<sup>40</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The Board of Control in Montreal." An address to the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Sept. 4-6, 1913 *Proceedings. Canadian Political Science Association*, vol. 1, 1913, pp. 137-138

<sup>41</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "City Government," in Adam Shortt, ed., *Canada and its Provinces*, vol. xv, *The Province of Quebec, part 1*, (Toronto, 1914) p. 314

<sup>42</sup> For a more detailed study of Montreal's Board of Control see, Michel Gauvin, "The Municipal Reform Movement in Montreal, 1886-1914," University of Ottawa: Unpublished Master's Thesis, 1972.

what Sherry Olson calls "new forms of repression" produced by the urban reform movement. The very people that urban reformers "sought to protect became victims of a new form of political and institutional paternalism, less personal, more professional."<sup>43</sup>

In the end Lighthall misread the needs of modern society and advocated conservative and counter productive solutions. Given that he was an imperialist and idealist it would be naive, even cynical, to expect otherwise. He perceived Canada's urban problems not as the fault of capitalism or of an unjust distribution of wealth but as the fault of degenerating moral standards. "[I]t has been well said," Lighthall wrote in an article on municipal reform, "that you cannot have an Ideal State without first having an Ideal People."<sup>44</sup> The solution therefore lay, in part, in moral training. In an address to the Canadian Club of Toronto he argued that "The lack of public spirit seems principally due to want of education...Our young are taught to prepare themselves for commercial life, but why should they not also be taught that they have serious obligations to their fellow members of society and that public service is honourable service."<sup>45</sup> In a speech on re-housing in Canada Lighthall offered an example of the sort of public service he had in mind: demonstrating that there was a profit to be made in the construction of affordable housing Lighthall concluded that "a

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<sup>43</sup> Sherry Olson, "Paternalism and Urban Reform, An Introduction," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire Urbaine*, vol xvii, no. 3, Feb. 1989, p. 143. Lighthall also advocated non-partisanship in municipal politics. For an analysis of the paternalism of non-partisanship see, James D. Anderson, "The Municipal Government Reform Movement in Western Canada, 1880-1920," in Alan Artibise and Gilbert Stelter eds., *The Usable Urban Past*, Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1979

<sup>44</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Municipal Freedom," *The Canadian Law Review*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 1905, p. 29

<sup>45</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The People as Municipalities," PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 11, file 1904, p. 4. See also, *Addresses Delivered Before the Canadian Club of Toronto, Season 1904-05*, (Toronto, 1905) See also W D Lighthall's *Canada, a modern nation* for an extended argument on the need for a national indoctrination campaign

good work lies before any capitalist who leans towards service to humanity."<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, when Lighthall advocated structural solutions it was not to alter the system but only to regulate it, to curb its excesses. And this is no more revealed than in his campaign against the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company and the founding of the Union of Canadian Municipalities.

## II

When referring to what he termed the "Crime of 1901" Lighthall instinctively launched into invective. "The story of guile, folly and greed which brought this about," he cried, "is a disgusting chapter in Canadian public affairs. which justifies and necessitates very determined measures of rebellion." "It became clear that that bill, [the bill to incorporate the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Co.,] was but one of the indicators of a widespread danger to the whole Canadian people: the introduction of the American trust system."<sup>47</sup> In an extended version of this speech, in his book, *Canada, a modern nation*, Lighthall argued that the trust system would necessarily lead to poverty, starvation, helplessness and unhappiness. Furthermore, "Do [trusts] not tend also to the old rule of privilege and the settlement of unfair distribution of the power, the honors and the goods of life?— the death of ambition, the death of manliness, the loss of rights, careers and liberties."<sup>48</sup> Given the importance of manliness to Lighthall's understanding of nationalism and the nation quite clearly the trust system had to be checked. And as Mayor of Westmount in 1901 Lighthall was "thrown into the hottest of the fight."<sup>49</sup> The word fight, however, demands qualification. It in no way meant revolution. It was a fight only in so far as Lighthall

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<sup>46</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Rehousing in Canada," *The Public Health Journal*, August 1912, p. 447

<sup>47</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The People as Municipalities," p. 4

<sup>48</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Canada, a modern nation*, p. 8

<sup>49</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Valedictory," p. 74

fought to win municipal control of the streets and in so far as he fought to regulate capitalism. In his own words, "Private ownership itself is not an evil, if limited."<sup>50</sup>

The beginning of Lighthall's confrontation with Montreal Light, Heat and Power can be found in the late 1890s, when he was a Westmount city councillor. Although he sat on several committees (the finance committee, the legal committee, the roads, parks, water and drainage committee and the health committee) between 1897 and 1900 Lighthall became increasingly interested in the question of streets, what he once identified as "the essence of a city's structure."<sup>51</sup> In an August 1897 letter to one Councillor Walker, chairman of the road committee, Lighthall wrote, "Since I have been in the Council it has become more and more apparent to me that the chief difficulties from which the Town is suffering arise from streets."<sup>52</sup> In a 1980 interview on the municipal career of her father, Alice Lighthall recalled how this was a time when big business was "simply running roughshod over all the young municipalities, and the older ones too, in their use of their streets without reference to the local authorities."<sup>53</sup> Indeed, in August 1898, exactly one year after Lighthall had written his letter of warning to Councillor Walker, the Town Council passed a resolution to protect its streets from the less than scrupulous electric companies: "Be it resolved that the poles already placed on Prince Albert Avenue by the Citizens Light and Power Co. and the Royal Electric Co. be ordered to be moved and placed in line

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<sup>50</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Canada, a modern nation*, p. 37

<sup>51</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "City Government," p. 306

<sup>52</sup> August 3, 1897. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 2, file Town of Westmount, 1897

<sup>53</sup> Alice Lighthall. Interviewed by H. Sally and H. McConnel on Jan. 9, 1980. Westmount Public Library, Mayoral Tapes Series. Alice Lighthall died in May, 1991. She was just two months away from her 100th birthday. An accomplished writer and active volunteer in the community Lighthall was made a member of the order of Canada in 1973.

under the direction of the Town Engineer."<sup>54</sup> And when the Town Council unanimously elected Lighthall as Mayor in January 1900 it elected a mayor for whom the question of streets in particular and municipal rights in general had become paramount. One of his first acts was to instruct "the Solicitor of the Town to hereafter to take such measures as may be necessary to watch all legislation at Quebec in which the City of Montreal is concerned, both in its inception and during its passage through the house so that no legislation inimical to the interests of Westmount may be passed without the knowledge of its council."<sup>55</sup> One year later, on March 4, 1901 the Town Solicitor reported to Council that Bill 142, a bill to incorporate the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Co. was now before the Legislative Assembly.

The story of Bill 142 is at once mundane and intriguing: mundane because the bill received two readings, amendments were proposed, defeated and then included before receiving Royal Assent on March 28, 1901; and intriguing because of the political games that were played during its passage, because it forced Lighthall into the fight of his life, because it led to the formation of the Union of Canadian Municipalities and because today Montreal Light, Heat and Power became Hydro-Quebec in 1944. On February 21, 1901 the Legislative Assembly heard a petition to incorporate Montreal Light, Heat and Power. On February 27 Bill 142 received its first reading and on the 28th its second reading. Two contentious issues immediately surfaced. One, the original incorporators of the bill were listed as H.J. Hague, A. Ernest Woodworth and Edmund F. Doty, respectively an advocate, book-keeper and stenographer. Quite clearly these three men did not possess the capital necessary to finance an electric utility but they did possess the anonymity necessary to fool

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<sup>54</sup> *Register of Council Proceedings* Town of Westmount. Westmount City Hall. August 1, 1898. Vol. 6, p 452

<sup>55</sup> *Register of Council Proceedings*. March 5, 1900. Vol. 7, p 229

unsuspecting politicians. And it worked: the bill went through two readings in as many days before the true incorporators were revealed. "This great octopus was sprung on the Assembly as a very unimportant bill," recalled the Hon. Dr. Guerin, a member of Parent's cabinet, "and it was only when discussion began that the real promoters became known."<sup>56</sup> The powers-that-be were none other than a group of Montreal's mega-financiers, a group that included the likes of James Ross, R.B. Angus, Herbert Holt and Louis Joseph Forget, one of the very few French Canadian business élite. That this group employed such a smoke and mirrors campaign to minimize the significance of the bill by diverting attention away from themselves is not surprising: Holt and Forget at least were notorious for their unscrupulous business behavior. Indeed, in 1887 Hugh Graham of the *Montreal Star* charged these two men with bribing the city council. The second contentious issue was article 10, an article which gave the new company the enormous and absolute power to "construct under or over the streets and public highways, all such pipes lines, conduits and other contructions as may be necessary for the purposes of its business"<sup>57</sup> anywhere in Quebec within a one hundred mile radius of the city of Montreal. As Lighthall observed this area comprised one half the population of Quebec and two thirds of its wealth. Moreover, he later argued to Robert Borden, "If private companies can control [the streets] the people are not free."<sup>58</sup> When the Town Solicitor informed the Westmount City Council of the events in Quebec City Lighthall immediately launched his campaign to stop the bill or at the very least guarantee ammendments.

Although Lighthall managed to secure ammendments he felt that they did not go far enough. On March 15, Bill 142 again came before the Legisaltive Assembly and this

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<sup>56</sup> March 25, 1901. *Montreal Witness*. *Lighthall Papers*, 12/12

<sup>57</sup> From the original bill PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 2, file Town of Westmount, 1901

<sup>58</sup> Quote in Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown, *A Nation Transformed*, p. 103

time amendments to article 10 were proposed to the effect that the company must obtain permission from the municipality before it could enter into construction. Those opposed to the amendments maintained that because other companies did not require such permission then neither should this company. The amendments were subsequently defeated in a vote and the bill was sent on to the Legislative Council. Lighthall later made the accusation— although he did not name any names— that someone had organized "the pre-purchase of all the Montreal papers at the newstands of Quebec to prevent their indignant protests circulating among the rural legislators."<sup>59</sup> On March 22 the Speaker of the Assembly announced that Bill 142 had passed the Legislative Council *with* the amendments; the bill then received its third and final reading and was passed. Meanwhile, back in the town of Westmount, Lighthall was busy preparing a petition to be presented to the Lieutenant-Governor requesting that he refuse his signature. Lighthall wanted an amendment stating that any construction done by Montreal Light Heat and Power be not only approved by the municipality but be approved through a municipal by-law. On March 23 Lighthall held a town meeting in Victoria Hall: in a vitriolic and impassioned speech he denounced the bill as an "iniquitous piece of legislation" and "a theft of our rights and a theft of our property." "I say that this whole business is simply a great organized theft."<sup>60</sup> The next day Lighthall and his small delegation left for Quebec in, to use his own words, a "manly and honorable spirit"<sup>61</sup> so that they might present their petition. Fearing a crisis the Lieutenant-Governor signed the bill on March 28. Lighthall had failed. But

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<sup>59</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Municipal Freedom," p 33

<sup>60</sup> *Montreal Herald*, March 25, 1901

<sup>61</sup> Sept. 25, 1901. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 2, file Town of Westmount, 1901



he did secure a promise from Premier Parent that he would further ammend the charter if company actions proved "inimical to the people."<sup>62</sup>

The entire affair left a bad taste in Lighthall's mouth. He realized that Montreal Light, Heat and Power was simply too formidable a foe for the Town of Westmount, indeed the "immensely profitable" and "much hated"<sup>63</sup> utility proved too formidable a foe to all its challengers. The economist John Dale described the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Co. as somewhat of a slum-lord, as a company that sought only to make enormous amounts of money and to defend its turf. "Defence of its monopoly position and exploitation of its market— with all the overtones of that word— were, first and last, to be the guiding principles of its operations."<sup>64</sup> French nationalists and reformers like Olivar Asselin and Henri Bourassa and other utility companies, like Canada Light, Heat and Power were no match for Montreal Light, Heat and Power.<sup>65</sup> It was, in a word, untouchable. Lighthall also realized that the municipalities could not always count on the support of the provincial government. He had secured a verbal promise from Parent but even bad lawyers know enough to know that a verbal promise is not a promise at all. Again he proved correct. On September 25, 1901 Lighthall wrote to Parent requesting that he introduce another ammendment in the next session. When he did not, Lighthall annotated his copy of the letter for posterity: "Parent was

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<sup>62</sup> Quote in Christopher Armstrong and H V Nelles, *Monopoly's Moment, The Organization and Regulation of Canadian Utilities, 1830-1930*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) p. 143

<sup>63</sup> David J. Bercuson and J L Granatstein, *Dictionary of Canadian History*, (Toronto: Collins Publishers, 1988) p. 95

<sup>64</sup> John Dale, *Hydroelectricity and Industrial Development: Quebec, 1898-1940*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957) p. 108

<sup>65</sup> See Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1969) pp. 47-56.

crooked."<sup>66</sup> Most disturbing to Lighthall, however, remained the inescapable conclusion: Montreal Light, Heat and Power was not an aberration. In a May 1901 newspaper article titled "The History of Our Natural Monopolies" he argued that "Our Combine [Montreal Light, Heat and Power] is by no means so original a conception as it is locally supposed by many. It is only a copy of American Light, Heat and Power companies and its methods are only copies of methods quite commonly attempted elsewhere."<sup>67</sup> Canada had entered a new stage of capitalism, that of share-held capital and the prospects were far from encouraging. "It is obvious that the inevitable end of the trust movement arising out of the facilities of share-held capital and stock manipulation will be to place all our national wealth in the power of a few men screened behind their treasury doors."<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, he warned, the nation's moral health was at risk because "the shareholder usually does not investigate the morality of his officers— he exacts of them one thing only— dividends."<sup>69</sup> And the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Co. always paid handsomely: 4% in 1902, 5% in 1907, 6% in 1908, 7.5% in 1911 and 10% between 1914 and 1916.<sup>70</sup> For Lighthall, in the spring of 1901, the time to act was now. "Unless we municipalities make our stand at present for the principle at stake we must submit to a future of most

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<sup>66</sup> PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol 2, file Town of Westmount 1901. In his thesis, "The Municipal Reform Movement in Montreal, 1886-1914" Michel Gauvin suggests that Parent was in the back pocket of Montreal Light, Heat and Power. For the effect the Montreal Light, Heat and Power debate had on the Liberal Party of Quebec see, Patrice Dutil, "L'Aigle et La Marmotte: The Liberal Party of Quebec, 1897-1905," York University unpublished graduate research paper, 1984, pp. 72-84.

<sup>67</sup> W. D. Lighthall, "The History of Our Natural Monopolies," May 1901, *Lighthall Papers*, 8/1 A.

<sup>68</sup> W. D. Lighthall, "The People as Municipalities," p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> John Dale, *Hydroelectricity and Industrial Development*, p. 119.

shameful imposition to which no other community in any civilized land would submit."<sup>71</sup>

In August of 1901 Lighthall and fifty-two other mayors from across Canada took their stand: the Union of Canadian Municipalities. "I see you are having trouble with the Bell Telephone company claiming rights over your streets," Lighthall wrote to Mayor O.A. Howland of Toronto on June 10, 1901. "I wish to propose the formation of a League of Canadian Municipalities, like the League of American Municipalities, for mutual protection against such encroachment."<sup>72</sup> Recognizing that there was strength in numbers Lighthall's idea was enthusiastically received ("A single municipality, however large or wealthy, cannot single handed, fight the lobbyists and franchise grabbers."<sup>73</sup>) and a convention was organized for the 28th of August. In a letter to his wife Lighthall described the convention as "wonderfully successful." "The whole convention," he wrote, "was a decided expression of Canadian national spirit."<sup>74</sup> As always Lighthall flogged national unity. He very much intended the Union of Canadian Municipalities to be a patriotic organization, an organization that would supercede local and provincial loyalties as much as he intended the Union to be a united front against those who would threaten the rights of municipalities. "Let us all feel that we have only one country, one citizenship, one desire to improve the lot of our people,"

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<sup>71</sup> W D. Lighthall, "The History of Our Natural Monopolies."

<sup>72</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 3/29. Lighthall's reference to the American League of Municipalities is interesting: although he very often dismissed, with contempt, the United States as an example not to be followed, he more than once looked to the Americans for examples on how to confront new social realities. The Great War Veterans Association was also inspired by and based on an American example. In a 1917 speech to the National Municipal League of the U.S. Lighthall stated quite unequivocally that during the past several years, "our cities of Canada usually look to yours for experience" ("War Time Experiences of Canadian Cities," *National Municipal Review*, vol vii, no 1, January 1918, p 19)

<sup>73</sup> From the program to the 6th annual convention of the UCM, 1906. *Lighthall Papers*, 8/1 A

<sup>74</sup> Aug. 31, 1901 *Lighthall Papers*, 23/8

he lectured. "The Union has no race, creed, nor party and all have stood equally by it."<sup>75</sup> Although Howland is given credit for founding the Union<sup>76</sup> Lighthall always insisted (privately) that in fact he was the founder. "I allowed Howland to be referred to as the originator several times, because it seemed to please him so much," a gracious Lighthall told his wife.

He seems to have once had some kind of very different idea floating in his mind— that of a convention of Ontario municipalities to form a financial credit union— a most impractical and provincial idea. However, the correspondence between us will record the actual position should it ever be worth my while to show it.<sup>77</sup>

Seventy-nine years later Alice Lighthall further corroborated her father's claim: when asked about her father's relationship to the Union of Canadian Municipalities she responded without hesitation, "as a matter of fact he was the founder."<sup>78</sup> In 1910 Lighthall reminisced about the founding of the Union: calling himself and his fellow mayors a group of "Don Quixotes" he said, with his characteristic morality, "Evil things were being done by unscrupulous financiers and politicians, which threatened the foundations of all liberty and honesty in Canada."<sup>79</sup>

Despite such assertions Lighthall's rhetoric and reality remained light years apart: more often than not he found himself in agreement with business and on one occasion he found an ally in his old enemy, the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Co. in the fight for a Board of Control in Montreal. Take, for example, the question of municipal ownership of utilities. Given Lighthall's uneasiness over trusts and his fear of share-held capitalism one might expect that he would have been an adamant supporter of

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<sup>75</sup> *The Canadian Municipal Journal*, vol. 1, no. 11, Nov. 1905, pp. 353-354

<sup>76</sup> Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, *Canada 1900-1945*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) p. 101

<sup>77</sup> Aug. 31, 1901. *Lighthall Papers*, 23/8

<sup>78</sup> Alice Lighthall, Jan. 9, 1980

<sup>79</sup> *The Canadian Municipal Journal*, vol. vi, no. 10, Oct. 1910, p. 384

municipal ownership. He was not. In an otherwise scathing denunciation of Montreal Light, Heat and Power Lighthall stated, without ambiguity, that trusts were not *inherently* evil.

Although I object to ["huge combinations of capital"] I am willing to admit that there are trusts which may be good things in themselves. My objection to trusts is when they undertake to control the whole supply of anything that may be necessary for the citizens of Montreal. There may be no thing actually wrong in a trust, but we need to watch them closely.<sup>80</sup>

Indeed, this remained Lighthall's position for the next twenty years: in January 1905 he lectured the Montreal Woman's Club on the question of municipal ownership, what he called "a great national question."<sup>81</sup> There was, he maintained, an important difference between ownership and control and that control was to be preferred. A few months later, in April 1905, he told the *Montreal Star* that municipal control would ensure "that the municipality might not be carrying on businesses out of its line but at the same time would have a proper check on the companies doing such businesses;"<sup>82</sup> and in a 1919 article for the *Canadian Bookman* Lighthall went even further when he argued, "the cities first object should be to furnish special advantages (differentials) to its businesses. To do so it must favour production—rather than ownership."<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Lighthall, in his paternalistic and (over) protective way, maintained that *only* private ownership was to be desired in cities "where education is low."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Montreal Herald*, March 25, 1901

<sup>81</sup> Jan. 16, 1905. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 11, file Municipal Control of Natural Monopolies, 1905

<sup>82</sup> April 15, 1905. PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 1, file 15

<sup>83</sup> PAC, *Lighthall Collection*, vol. 11, file A Lesson for Canadian Cities, 1919

<sup>84</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The History of Our Natural Monopolies."

Simply, Lighthall preferred to create counterweights (i.e. the Union of Canadian Municipalities as watchdog) to balance the excesses of the system. In 1903 he stated unequivocally:

Let us not be taken as advocating war on Trade, on Corporations, or on Capital, because we raise a worrying voice against their abuses. None are more anxious than we that every beneficent force of enterprise and exchange should be enlisted, protected and encouraged. Our hope is that discontent may be prevented, disruption forestalled and reckless conduct be checked; limits set only to pure greed, and that abnormalities be firmly pruned down to the reasonable.<sup>85</sup>

And in a 1905 "private and confidential" letter to Wilfrid Laurier he pointed out how "We municipal men throughout Canada see ourselves faced with a new power, that of amalgamated capital, and we have some taste of the evils of permitting such capital to go uncontrolled locally." He was quick to add, however, "that the general body of leading municipal authorities, although they agree upon the evils above mentioned are exceedingly conservative and anxious not to injure capital, and have no sympathy with pure extremists."<sup>86</sup> Laurier no doubt slept well knowing Lighthall was not taking to the streets in revolution. Indeed, he agreed with him: after all, the "Government's operation of railways in this country has not been successful."<sup>87</sup>

As a red tory Lighthall instinctively resisted too much government intrusion. Describing himself as "an old fashioned Tory and an old fashioned Liberal"<sup>88</sup> he believed in a natural social heirarchy, an organic/collective society, deference to authority and an emphasis on peace, order and good government; but he also believed in the individual and the responsibility of the individual. He therefore did not advocate state coercion: he believed that people must be taught, not told, to behave with the

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<sup>85</sup> *Horizon*, January 1903 *Lighthall Papers*, Collected Pamphlets

<sup>86</sup> Jan. 30, 1905. *Lighthall Papers*, 3/31

<sup>87</sup> Feb. 2, 1905. *Lighthall Papers*, 3/31

<sup>88</sup> W.D. Lighthall, preface to *The Young Seigneur*, p. iii

greater good in mind. "The liberal is apt to underpin all obligations with moral obligations since it is moral will which generates the power which sustains all human relationships," writes political theorist, D.J. Manning. "It is inconceivable that we could be properly or successfully be compelled by the state to perform the obligations prescribed by natural law, the principle of utility or idealist ethics."<sup>89</sup> State coercion weakened moral initiative and personal responsibility. The power of the state could be used, however, to encourage or complement individual morality. For example Lighthall asserted that poor housing conditions led to degenerating moral standards; the state, therefore, could step in to set housing regulations. Likewise, he maintained that a poor public environment led to immoral public behavior; as a member of the Metropolitan Parks Commission he stressed the need to bring the country to the city through a vast parks system. In both examples capitalism is left uncritiqued as the "problems of poverty were reformulated as problems of the urban environment."<sup>90</sup>

Not surprisingly, Canada's business élite found in Lighthall a man they could do business with. In 1906 Lighthall entertained the idea of running in a provincial by-election, and although in the end he chose not to, his comments to the press remain rich with insight. When asked what his platform would be he responded: "The vigilant guarding of the interests of Montreal, especially the pockets of the householders, against stock-manipulators of monopolies and irresponsible charter sharks but without injury to the legitimate interests and with fair consideration of the position of innocent shareholders." In other words: business as usual. Indeed, business

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<sup>89</sup> D.J. Manning, *Liberalism*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1976) p. 17. See also Gad Horowitz, "Conservatism, Liberalism and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. xxxii, no. 2, May 1966

<sup>90</sup> Sherry Olson, "Paternalism and Urban Reform, An Introduction," p. 144

appreciate<sup>d</sup> Lighthall's essentially conservative platform. As he told the reporter, "I have been reached by the requests from several of the most prominent business men of the city urging me to stand for election."<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, Lighthall repeatedly argued that efficient and effective municipal government must necessarily be based on business principles. In his essay, "Westmount: A Municipal Illustration," he observed that,

The people [of Westmount] have elected to the council a succession of business men, and given them a free hand. As a result, the services of the municipality have been developed on sound general principles.<sup>92</sup>

A city was essentially a business and as Lighthall once said, "to run a business demands business people."<sup>93</sup> At one point Lighthall's commitment to business approached the absurd: arguing that because business men governed Westmount the City therefore offered more efficient snow removal; in turn, more efficient snow removal meant that "not only are the road beds kept beautifully ploughed but every footway is cleaned after a storm in time for business men to pass with comfort to their occupations and without special charge."<sup>94</sup> Not having to wade through snow drifts certainly endeared the urban reform movement to Montreal's business élite. But the compatibility of reformers and business men existed on a much more intimate level: they were affluent, English and residents of Westmount; they shared similar values on Canada and the Empire; they believed that such statistics as trade revenues and the gross national product measured progress; and when they did differ it was only on questions of degrees (how much municipal control was required?), not on questions of substance (business never wanted to operate in an absolutely unregulated

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<sup>91</sup> *Lighthall Papers*, 12/13

<sup>92</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Westmount: A Municipal Illustration," p. 28

<sup>93</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "The People As Municipalities," p. 5

<sup>94</sup> W.D. Lighthall, "Westmount: A Municipal Illustration," p. 30



environment.<sup>95</sup>) Nor was this unique to Montreal, it existed across the country. "Here was the central weakness of the municipal reform movement," write Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown. "Its goals and those of the industries it sometimes sought to restrain, were frequently identical."<sup>96</sup>

In 1916 Lighthall wrote a poem to mark the death of William Cornelius Van Horne, president of the C.P.R., capitalist king-pin and notorious union buster. Titled simply "Van Horne" Lighthall described his friend and colleague as having a "will of bronze."

Fit for imperial conquests, to whose force  
Grim nature bowed her Rockies; his vast brain,  
Ingenious, swift, wide-ranging; fount of wit  
That the turned the gravest graybeards into boys.<sup>97</sup>

Lighthall admired Van Horne; he liked his energy, his independence, his initiative and his fantastic will. And Lighthall admired the system that encouraged excellence and allowed a man like Van Horne to use his natural talents and to succeed. Men like Van Horne vindicated the system. No wonder then that Lighthall's efforts to reform the system more often than not reinforced the system: as far as he was concerned the system itself was basically good and needed only refinement. But it would be a mistake to argue that Lighthall was simply acting out of self-interest: he was an imperialist and an idealist and he very much believed that he was doing his duty to his Empire, to his country and to his city.

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<sup>95</sup> For an analysis of business attitudes see, Tom Traves, *The State and Enterprise, Canadian Manufacturers and the Federal Government 1917-1931*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979. See also, Tom Traves, ed., *Essays in Canadian Business History*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984.

<sup>96</sup> Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown, *A Nation Transformed*, p 106

<sup>97</sup> W.D. Lighthall, *Collected Measures*, p 108

*Conclusion*

Throughout his presidential address to the Canadian Authors' Association Lighthall made repeated appeals to the glory of the Empire. He spoke eloquently on "our ambition for a wider human sympathy and our attachment to the world-wide brotherhood of the Empire" and he reminded his listeners of their duty to "our Empire—the imperial nation." He then pronounced on the need for an ideal to be placed before the nation: "my solution to the ideal for Canada, and the Empire that we should serve, is that there should be agreed upon and taught among us a clear programme of the highest and best total national life to which a nation can aspire, our ideal dream of the future Canada."<sup>1</sup> The year was 1930. And Lighthall was sadly out of touch with his country. His speech was full of atavisms and he himself was an anachronism. Indeed, the younger generation of intellectuals, those who had seen the Empire exposed in the trenches of Europe, mocked the likes of Lighthall. F.R. Scott, for example, laughed at the "Victorian saintliness"<sup>2</sup> of the older generation, and he dismissed their unfailing adherence to the "milk-and-honey late-Victorian God-and-Maple-Tree romanticism of Bliss Carman."<sup>3</sup>

That Scott found Lighthall laughable is hardly surprising. As Doris Lessing writes, "Anyone who reads history at all knows that the passionate and powerful convictions of one century usually seem absurd, extraordinary to the next."<sup>4</sup> And Lighthall, always the Victorian, remained firmly rooted in the nineteenth century. Literature promoted society's norms and values: his writing, therefore, evaded controversial

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<sup>1</sup> *Authors' Bulletin*, vol. viii, no. 1, Sept. 1930, p. 5

<sup>2</sup> F.R. Scott, "The Canadian Authors Meet," *McGill Fortnightly Review*, vol. II, April 27, 1927, p. 73

<sup>3</sup> F.R. Scott, "New Poems for Old: II The Renewal of Poetry," *Canadian Forum*, xi, June 1931, p. 339

<sup>4</sup> Doris Lessing, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, (London: Jonathon Cape, 1987. The 1985 Massey Lectures) p. 15

subjects and encouraged consensus. *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals, The Young Seigneur* and *Songs of the Great Dominion* express a national ideal based on duty to the community and encourage patriotism to that ideal. Similarly, Lighthall advocated *noblesse oblige* as the solution to Canada's social problems: if only the upper classes could receive a better moral training, could be taught the clear national ideal, then their natural sense of duty and justice would compel them to act. Thus his campaign against Montreal Light, Heat and Power failed to challenge organized capital. Scott, on the other hand, was a Modernist, fully a product of the twentieth century. As a poet he questioned and criticized; as a reformer he used the power of the government to enforce social justice.

Despite their differences, however, both Lighthall and Scott shared a common, conservative vision of society. Society, emphatically, was not a crude agglomeration of rugged and competing individuals but an organic and collective whole. And this vision, furthermore, distinguished Canada from the United States. Herein lies Lighthall's contribution to Canada: although we may laugh at his incessant appeals to the Empire and although we may wince at his crude racial theorizing, he, nonetheless, encouraged a Canadian vision of society. A vision which remains very much a part of the Canadian intellectual tradition and continues to distinguish us from the United States.

In March of 1943 Lighthall, then 86 years old, received a letter from Lt. Col. C.R. McCullough, an old friend and president of the Canadian Legion.

It was good to get the freshness of your recollections of over fifty years ago when you and I dreamed dreams for our beloved Canada, then being sorely tempted by the brilliant "Goldwin" to humbly submit to ner 'Manifest Destiny' under 'southern' rather than 'northern' stars. Isn't it a source of satisfaction to know that our young men's enthusiasm proved to be the truer index of 'the shape of things to come' than the cold 'factual' forecast of Smith? The poet, my dear Lighthall, is a far,

far better prophet than the bloodless and unimaginative logician. God save us all when the idealists are swamped by the realists.<sup>5</sup>

Lighthall had fought the good fight against Goldwin Smith in the 1880s and 1890s and, indeed through out his life, he had assisted in the transformation of Canada from a colonial backwater to an independent nation, separate from the United States. To know that his peers acknowledged his contributions must have been very rewarding, a source of tremendous satisfaction.

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<sup>5</sup> March 6, 1943. *Lighthall Papers*, 2/2

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