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Ondaatje and Canons

by

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Abstract

Most inquiries into the nature of literary value have focused on how the academy shapes literary taste and determines the reputation of individual authors. This thesis examines how ideas of literary canon can impact a writer at the creative level. Michael Ondaatje's interest in the cultural significance of authorship makes him ideal for this topic of study. The first essay discusses how Ondaatje's repeated quotation of his own texts can be viewed as a metafictional commentary on the anxieties of literary innovation. It shows how the idea of literary influence and the author's relationship to the canon can be embodied as a formal and thematic characteristic of the literary text. The second essay shows how Ondaatje responds to traditional conceptions of the English-Canadian canon as an editor of a national anthology of short fiction. Early national anthologists beginning with E. H. Dewart in his Selections from Canadian Poets (1864) consolidated a set of evaluative criteria that reflected aspects of nineteenth-century English-Canadian nationalism. This essay examines two national anthologies that represent an alternative to this tradition. John Simpson's The Canadian Forget Me Not for MDCCCXXXVII (1837) is a representation of popular nineteenth-century bourgeois literary taste that predates this legitimating rhetoric. Michael Ondaatje's From Ink Lake (1990) renders an ironic commentary on this hundred-year-old legacy of canon formation.

Résumé

La plupart des recherches sur la nature de la valeur littéraire ont mis l'accent sur la manière dont le monde académique façonne le goût littéraire et détermine la réputation des auteurs individuels. Ce mémoire examine l'impact des idées du canon littéraire sur le niveau de créativité d'un auteur. Michael Ondaatje, parce qu'il s'intéresse à la signification culturelle de l'écriture, est un auteur idéal pour cette étude. Le premier essai porte sur l'interprétation de la tendance de Ondaatje à se citer lui-même en tant que commentaire "métafictionnel" sur les anxiétés de l'innovation littéraire. Cela démontre comment l'influence de l'idée littéraire ainsi que la relation de l'auteur au canon peuvent être intégrées pour devenir une caractéristique thématique et formelle du texte littéraire. Le deuxième essai explique comment Ondaatje réagit aux conceptions traditionnelles du canon canadien-anglais en tant qu'éditeur d'une anthologie nationale de nouvelles. Les premiers anthologistes nationaux, dont E. H. Dewart dans sa Selections from Canadian Poets (1864), ont établi un ensemble de critères d'évaluation qui reflétaient les aspects du nationalisme canadien anglais du dix-neuvième siècle. Cet essai examine deux anthologies nationales qui représentent une alternative à cette tradition. John Simpson dans The Canadian Forget Me Not for MDCCCXXXVII (1837) illustre le goût littéraire populaire bourgeois du dix-neuvième siècle qui précède ce langage légitimant. Michael Ondaatje dans From Ink Lake (1990) formule un commentaire ironique sur cet héritage du canon vieux de cent ans.

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Introduction: Michael Ondaatje and Canons

> It's that private public thing that happens in art which I love. Other people recognize themselves in it and it becomes shared.
>
> —Michael Ondaatje, Interview with Pearl Geffen (Gefen D3)

Michael Ondaatje's novel, The English Patient, and a copy of his selected poems, The Cinnamon Peeler, are on sale on a supermarket bookrack--in Poland. They are displayed among titles such as basketball star Denis Rodman's autobiography, Bad as I Wanna Be, John Grisham's latest spy thriller, and the collected works of the recent Polish Nobel laureate for literature, Wislawa Syzmborska. Ondaatje has become part of popular cultural discourse in a country that has only recently begun to reintegrate into Western economic, political, and cultural life. Quoting the newsletter of a consulting firm to book publishers on both sides of the Atlantic, the European edition of Newsweek announces: "Rodman, Ondaatje take Poland by Storm" (Jones 44). The English Patient is on the Polish best-seller list and the film adaptation by Anthony Minghella is a Polish blockbuster.

Witnessing the Polish reception of Ondaatje's novel, I was reminded of the degree to which historical and cultural contexts determine the significance of literary art. Even from the point of view of an outsider--as a Canadian looking in on an Eastern European cultural encounter--its resonances in this new context

were not difficult to imagine and served to highlight the differences in cultural and intellectual influences that underpin my own readings of Ondaatje as well as those of Canadian literary criticism and the Canadian periodical press. For Poles, the suffering that marks the lives of Ondaatje's characters during World War II is reflected in an ever-present awareness of national and personal history. It is a history that is as palpable as the nation's urban architectural landscape, which embodies a deliberate reconstruction of Poland's past as well as manifestations of the communist attempt at its effacement. The English Patient's central themes of individual and national identity are inherent in understandings of the war, its communist aftermath, and the current reorientation toward the West. The film and the novel, which was introduced in Polish translation as a spin-off of its adaptation,[1] are both evocative of the past and indicative of Poland's enthusiastic embrace of Western consumer culture. Maclean's was irritated by the American sponsorship of the film, lamenting "How *our* book became *their* movie" (Johnson 42-46, [cover]). For Poles, The English Patient was the latest in a long tradition of cultural appropriation that dates back to the earliest days of the Cold War when black marketers could barely keep up with the demand for Marlboro cigarettes and American blue jeans.

Its adaptation into film, re-presentation through publicity, and resituation within an Eastern European milieu, emphasizes the extent to which literature can be reinscribed

with a unique relevance within a variety of reception contexts. It demonstrates Barbara Herrnstein Smith's observation that different appropriations imply the creation of new versions of the same literary text, a text that can be "recurrently reconstituted . . . by various subjects at various times" (27). Evidence of these reconstitutions is especially apparent to the traveler, who can observe familiar objects used in unfamiliar ways, its new functions appearing as clear and peculiar as the books used to repair the steps of the ruined staircase in The English Patient's Villa San Girolamo.

Contrasts in cultural significance are equally remarkable in the Canadian context even if at first they seem less obvious and less bewildering for their reflection of well-known evaluative custom. The extension of Ondaatje's cultural currency, implied by his introduction into foreign markets, has its counterpart in Canada where his works and the significance of his identity as an author have been translated into a wide range of literary, cultural, and political contexts. The intersection of Ondaatje's authorial persona, his literary narratives, and the wider public sphere has advanced considerably since John Diefenbaker balked at the selection of The Collected Works of Billy the Kid for the 1970 Governor-General's award for poetry.[2] The English Patient phenomenon has prompted a much more complex entanglement of cultural discourses that has impacted upon readers' interpretation of Ondaatje's works. It has also brought into fuller fruition an already emerging evaluative context where Ondaatje, along with other

contemporary Canadian authors, has had to react to a new set of demands, which emanate from popular discussions of literature in the Canadian and foreign media. A situation has arisen where authors have been coerced into a position where they must act and write in response to the cult of personality assembled around them.[3]

It has been observed that the extraordinary publicity stemming from the film adaptation has made The English Patient one of the most popular novels in recent memory but also one of the least read. In the days following the film's Oscar success, Knopf Canada reported that it was "deluged with calls" (Renzetti C1), a reaction that signaled a boom in the novel's sales already well under way since the film's release.[4] This radical increase in sales suggests that even many of those who did finish the novel, after they discovered its "intimate pace and detail" (Ondaatje, Introduction xvii), began their reading with expectations that were formulated by the publicity that surrounded the film. The complementarity between the novel and the film demonstrates how new sites of literary publicity help to create a public Canadian canon that is not legitimated through criteria associated with academic statements about "literary excellence."

In his introduction to Anthony Minghella's screenplay, Ondaatje acknowledges how easy it was for readers and viewers to confuse the narratives of the film and novel:

> One day when they were shooting a Cairo taxi scene, someone came up to Anthony and said, "I'm so glad you

> kept the taxi scene from the book." He received a slow burn from Anthony as there had never been a taxi in the book. This happened often. (Ondaatje, Introduction xvii)

Ondaatje's example suggests how a knowledge of the film could alter conceptions of the original text. This interpretive substitution must have taken place in a number of ways that extended even beyond a confusion of the story lines of these two authorized versions. In addition to prompting a convergence between the "elliptical novel" and the "romantic epic" (Johnson 43), the film's release resituated Ondaatje and his narrative within a variety of evaluative milieus that engendered a hybridization of his literary text and the *glitz* of the American entertainment industry. An advertisement in the Toronto Star described the film as "An epic romance with enough desert heat from Ralph Fiennes and Kristin Scott Thomas to turn Oscar into molten metal!" (English Patient D6). Vintage's and Miramax's web pages provided an electronic analog to the imaginative intertexts that made Fiennes and the rest of the film's cast *de facto* representations of the characters in the novel. The Vintage page, which reproduced the novel's new cover, a romantic film still of Fiennes and Thomas, suggested a perusal of a page where Miramax offered hypertext links to "Ralph Fiennes Fan Club," "Photos of Ralph Fiennes," and "more photos of Ralph Fiennes."

These new perspectives on The English Patient narrative involve a reinscription of value and meaning that creates sundry

notions about the novel, some of which provide a significant form of feedback for interpretations of its original while others are spent in the informational eddies of the popular media. The film was mentioned on shows such as Seinfeld and The Simpsons and was a favourite reference on late night television. It was commodified into memorabilia: the Book Company in Vancouver experienced a wave of requests for promotional material where customers "implied that they willing to offer a lot of money" (Renzetti C1). The sales potential of what can be called 'The English Patient brand' even affected the marketing, and one assumes the reading, of Herodotus's Histories, a classic of the Western canon "carried by the English Patient's hero played by Ralph Fiennes" (Renzetti C1). Knopf released a hardback Everyman edition with the cover adorned with one of the cave drawings seen in the film (Renzetti C1).

Ondaatje has acknowledged the inevitability and range of these appropriations. Not surprisingly his own creative use of entertainment narratives has not mitigated his uneasiness about the fact that his literary and personal biography has become increasingly the subject of popular media interest:

> I think what's happened is that The English Patient has become something that's not owned by me. It's in the hands of David Letterman now, which is really odd for someone who's a poet. (Ratliff G1)

Ondaatje is apprehensive about an inversion in the relationship between author and audience that constitutes the private sphere of literary creation, a personal artistic realm suggested by the

juxtaposition of his identity as a "poet" to the corporate showmanship of Letterman. Indeed, Ondaatje is conscious that he is enfolded in just the latest and most exceptional instance of an increased commercialization of Canadian literary culture that has been underway since the end of World War II.

> Privacy is essential. I've seen a lot of writers being interpreted by their personalities--Ginsberg, Layton, serious writers turned into personas. That's the cause of all this paranoia. You want the book to be read, not the author. (Ross S16)

His grouping of Layton with Ginsberg is appropriate both because the Canadian market was following the lead of American example and because Layton was the first Canadian author to garner a significant cult of personality. Paradoxically, Ondaatje's long-standing reluctance to engage with the media has become one of the salient aspects of his popular portrayal. His attempts to avoid having his popular biography account for the creative origins and character of his writings has resulted in his being depicted as "an enigmatic black box" (Ross S16), "the soft-spoken and intensely private Canadian author" (Koring A1). He has been compared to J. D. Salinger (Prokosh B3). Phillip Marchand conflates this aspect of Ondaatje's popular persona with his portrayal of himself in Running in the Family, a figurative depiction that evokes a favourite motif modeled on Isadora Duncan.[5]

> English colonial writers are allowed to be taciturn and reticent--especially when everybody knows there

> are fires burning beneath the reticence. Fires that occasionally surface in such odd . . . physical stunts with wine glasses. (Marchand G10)

Marchand substitutes both a media and a literary construction of Ondaatje in lieu of substantive biographical information. The fact that 'nothing counts for something' demonstrates the paradoxical nature of popular literary repute and the challenge posed to Canadian authors to come to terms with this broadening of the public role of Canadian literature. As Canadian literature becomes more commercialized, Canadian authors will increasingly find themselves negotiating new audiences who demand a new form of literary cultural exchange.[6]

Popularizations of Canadian literature reclassify and reinterpret textual and biographical material according to criteria that differ from scholarly evaluations in their understandings of the consumption and interpretation of literary culture. This public repertoire of interpretations is, however, only a popular counterpart to a diverse gallery of scholarly appropriations that are equally significant as reflections of aesthetic and institutional ideologies. Academic critiques have demonstrated that Ondaatje is a hotly-contested literary property. Sam Solecki's attempt to situate Michael Ondaatje's fiction within the category of literary modernism in "Making and Destroying: Michael Ondaatje's Coming Through Slaughter and Extremist Art" shows how this contestation can shape critical accounts. Solecki writes in 1979 at a moment when Canadian criticism was beginning to feel the influence of

poststructuralist thought and definitions of literary postmodernism. In the same year, George Bowering announced that "Modernism Could Not Last Forever" and listed Ondaatje as one of "the few other post-realists" whose writing demonstrated a consciousness of Cartier-Bresson's photography, "perhaps *the* major influence on postmodern fiction & poetry" ("Modernism" 5, 8).

Solecki takes his cues from an earlier body of Canadian critical interests and attempts to lay out a framework for Ondaatje's retroactive canonization as a author who exemplifies the legacy of early twentieth century writing. He is determined to situate Ondaatje within a past literary historical category rather than ascertaining his contemporary influences and identity. To smooth over a claim that is based in an anachronism, Solecki employs broad thematic and historical analogies, conflating literary and historical narratives, that enable him to skirt a textually-grounded study of literary influence. For Solecki, Ondaatje exhibits a theme and a psychological disposition, "Mental illness and/or suicide" ("Making" 25), that is seen to stem from the modernist writer's inner search for representable material. Ondaatje accepts a real "psychological risk" when he "dredg[es] up from his memory or subconscious impulses, events and characters that he proposes to use in his art" (Solecki, "Making" 29). These difficulties and personal risks constitute a modernist poetic of self-sacrifice. In this schema, Ondaatje's character of Buddy Bolden becomes an "exemplary embodiment of a tone, an attitude, a trend

in twentieth-century art" (Solecki, "Making" 26) both because he exhibits this aforementioned artistic dilemma and because his real life counterpart actually existed during the era just preceding World War I: "By a sort of fictive *trompe d'oeil* he [Bolden] is simultaneously at the beginning and end of the modern era" (Solecki, "Making" 26). Ondaatje's use of Bolden distinguishes him as an "extremist writer" because it demonstrates a disturbed personal psychology that is common to writers such as Lowell, Plath, and Sexton (Solecki, "Making" 25). For Solecki, writers such as these constitute a "tradition" within modernist writing where life on "'the friable edge'" ("Making" 25) leads to literary innovation.

A well-known Canadian writer such as Ondaatje is translated into a diverse array of evaluative contexts, which affect readings of his texts and conceptions of his literary biography. The variety of these appropriations demonstrate Barbara Herrnstein Smith's contention that evaluation and evaluative discourses function strategically or, in other words, according to a principle of "contingency." For Smith, literary values are the product of an elaborate process where artistic objects and their parallel evaluative discourses are valorized according to how well they satisfy the "interactive and interdependent" functioning of both public and personal economies of interest (11-12).

I will examine how some of these evaluative economies can be reinscribed into the creative narratives of a writer who has demonstrated an interest in the cultural significance of

authorship. Most inquiries into the nature of literary value have focused on how the academy shapes literary taste and determines the reputation of individual authors. This thesis examines how ideas of literary canon have impacted upon Michael Ondaatje as a writer of poetry and fiction and as an editor of a Canadian literary anthology.

The first essay discusses how Ondaatje's repeated quotation of his own texts can be viewed as a metafictional commentary on the anxieties of literary innovation. It shows how the idea of literary influence and the author's relationship to the canon can be embodied as a formal and thematic characteristic of the literary text. The second essay shows how Ondaatje responds to traditional conceptions of the English-Canadian canon as an editor of a national anthology of short fiction. Early national anthologists beginning with E. H. Dewart in his Selections from Canadian Poets (1864) consolidated a set of evaluative criterion that reflected aspects of nineteenth-century English-Canadian nationalism. This essay examines two national anthologies that represent an alternative to this tradition. John Simpson's The Canadian Forget Me Not for MDCCCXXXVII (1837) is a representation of popular nineteenth-century bourgeois literary taste that predates this legitimating rhetoric. Michael Ondaatje's From Ink Lake (1990) renders an ironic commentary on this hundred-year-old legacy of canon formation. The general aim of these chapters is to explore two ways in which literary evaluative discourse can work in the spheres of private experience and public political discourse.

Chapter I: Autocanonization and the Problem of Influence in the Writings of Michael Ondaatje

> There are churches in Rome that stand on the remains of two or three earlier churches, all built on the same spot.
>
> —Michael Ondaatje, "Interview" (251)

When I read Michael Ondaatje's poetry and fiction I experience a sense of déjà-vu. Distinctive characters, scenes, and symbols recur from book to book, adapted and reconfigured to fit seamlessly into different narrative and formal contexts. A description in In The Skin of a Lion of Patrick Lewis's father leaving "a track of half-inch holes in the granite" (Ondaatje, Skin 18) along an Ontario riverbank alludes to "the path / of a heron's suicide / tracks left empty" in Ondaatje's early poem, "Birds for Janet--The Heron" (Ondaatje, "Birds" 3). The quiet technical precision of Kip in The English Patient is found also in In the Skin of a Lion's Temelcoff whose Newtonian free-falls chart space "in terms of seconds of movement" (Ondaatje, Skin 35). The flare-light that trails the "dead star" (Ondaatje, Skin 35) of Temelcoff's body suggests the poem "White Dwarfs" where the speaker is afraid of "falling without words" (Ondaatje, "Dwarfs" 68). Idiosyncratic details such as these cut across several of Ondaatje's books of poetry and fiction, a collection of 12 books spanning nearly two decades. These allusions are so vivid that when I look at the volumes of Ondaatje's poetry and fiction on my bookshelf, adjacent to each other and bordered on each side by The Dainty Monsters and The

English Patient, his first and latest published work, they appear as individual yet interrelated chapters of a single book.

This image of a selection of writings grouped together because of their similar relationship to a common pool of tropes and narratives is analogous to the way we imagine the relationship of texts in a literary history. The Norton anthology's grouping of poems such as Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" or its meticulous tracing of literary allusion through copious footnotes that ground nearly each page like a classical pediment is a conscious form of literary periodization and history writing. Often ascribing agency to texts rather than writers, anthologies are notoriously anti-historical in their re-creation of the dialogues and debates of various "schools," "movements," and literary ages. Although some literary historical episodes did take place, many are convenient narratives that forge a history for the sake of "remembering," as the Norton sometimes acknowledges. Based on a constantly shifting criteria of inclusion and relationship, historical anthologies such as the Norton build an always modern history of literature out of a sundry group of sometimes directly-related texts. Ondaatje also writes a history.

Like an anthologist, Ondaatje makes deliberate connections between disparate texts. The difference, however, is that he draws the loop of literary canonical reference even tighter by citing and reworking his own writings. If Ondaatje's self-

reference is a form of pedagogy, it attempts to teach only one imaginative tradition--his own. The literary history that emerges as we read through Ondaatje's poetry and fiction is one that attempts to begin and end with these same writings. Of course, it can never succeed since his debts to high cultural and popular texts and to the stories of literature, history, and myth make clear Ondaatje's position within a larger genealogy of writing and speaking. Any attempt to write an absolutely self-sufficient poem or piece of fiction cannot help but draw attention to itself as a 'monumental' failure. This inevitable relationship of the writer to narrative and formal canons, however, is exactly the issue that concerns Ondaatje and it explains why he intends his readers to notice that he is constantly rebuilding his literary texts upon the same foundations. For Ondaatje, this "failure" is a planned and public literary device. We can be certain of Ondaatje's intent in this case because he often draws attention to his own narcissistic literary borrowings, identifying them for the reader as a form of literary artifice characteristic of his own writings. Ondaatje's autocanonical gestures are a metafictional commentary on the anxieties of literary innovation.

This theatrical sense of his own writing is also demonstrated in the way he discusses issues of literary influence. Ondaatje's statements about authors and writing are a reiterated inside joke on the cultural media and the rhetoric of the literary star system. A seemingly innocuous statement about writing often contains a self-parodying reference aimed

at undermining the platitudes and the popular mythology that inform discussions on creativity. Referring to his building and recycling of a personal literary typology, Ondaatje states that he does not want to become a writer "with only one book in him" ("Conversation" 9). In a comment that may also be poking fun, Ondaatje states that he would not want to become "like a lot of people who get locked in their own style and . . . [who] end up parodying themselves" ("Conversation" 8). As with his self-conscious commentary on his position within literary tradition, Ondaatje responds to the seemingly indelible stereotypes of "the author" that threaten to demystify unique creative achievement through the ascription of meaningless evaluative labels. Whether on the page or in public, Ondaatje is often writing himself into existence. Given this parallel effort, it is not surprising, then, that we find Ondaatje adapting the literary devices that he uses in his texts to discuss the same issues of authorship on the public stage. When he talks about his own writing practice, Ondaatje frequently uses the images that characterize the efforts and qualities of his own characters.

In this essay, I will survey Ondaatje's use of autocanonical allusion and show how he has mediated his public literary persona by adapting the literary devices of his own writings. A paradox revealed in this survey is that in lamenting his eclipsed historical position as a writer, Ondaatje is able to consolidate a distinctive authorial identity. This is achieved in part through the reiteration of

a defining repertoire of narratives and symbols and through the creation of a novel formal strategy that embodies the anxieties of influence. For Ondaatje, the symptoms of the disease seem to initiate a cure.

* * *

Ondaatje's linking of his writings in the manner of an anthology is not surprising given his techniques of organizing his own collections of poetry. Ondaatje writes and arranges his verse in order to suggest narrative connections between individual poems and between seemingly unrelated characteristics within a single poem. His method of achieving these connections depends upon a subtle reformulation of some aspect that his reader might remember from another part of the collection or from another part of the same poem. Ondaatje's "Dates" and "King Kong Meets Wallace Stevens" demonstrate this technique while also serving as an early example of Ondaatje's thematization of literary anxiety.

"Dates" establishes a relationship between two worlds and two events that are separated by geography, history, and culture, by all accounts but time. This correspondence between Ceylon and Wallace Stevens's Connecticut and between Ondaatje's physical development within his mother's womb and the writing of a modernist poem is established by sketching vague but provocative parallels between these otherwise disparate worlds. Ondaatje's mother "sweats out her pregnancy" in the Ceylonese heat while Stevens writes on a balmy summer day "so hot" that he "wore only shorts" (Ondaatje, <u>There's a Trick</u> 41). Both

Ondaatje's mother and Stevens sit in the evening darkness beneath the cool rotation of a bedroom fan. Ondaatje as fetus "drink[s] the life lines" streaming from his mother's placenta as Stevens sips "a glass of orange juice" (Ondaatje, There's a Trick 41). Even their physical appearances seem interchangeable: the pregnant belly of Ondaatje's mother resembles the potbelly of a bare-chested modernist.

Parallel experiences of light and temperature or the repeated outline of a physique or physical gesture intimate a connection between the two worlds that runs counter to the poem's overt narrative statement. Despite the apparent spatial and cultural division suggested by their location, Stevens and Ondaatje compete to assert their presence in the common space constructed by the poem. The two worlds lie in an antagonistic palimpsest, each layer trying to efface the other. The narrator's opening claims are obviously a distortion since "instruments," namely those of Ondaatje's poetic, *have* "agreed on a specific weather" and, if read in conjunction with "King Kong Meets Wallace Stevens," "monuments," as least those of literary modernism, do in fact "bleed." Given that it is Ondaatje's poetic that controls Stevens's fate in "Dates," the poem can be read as Ondaatje's version of poetic justice. It is a literary fulfillment of the murder that appears imminent at the end of "King Kong Meets Wallace Stevens" where "The hands [of Wallace Stevens] drain from his jacket, / pose in the murderer's shadow [Ondaatje]" (Ondaatje, "King" 61).

Ondaatje adapts this technique to achieve the more sustained narratives of fiction. In an interview in 1984, well after he had begun his experimentation with the novel form, Ondaatje stated that the "repeating and building of images" is a fundamental method that he used to bind the fragments of a work of prose. According to Ondaatje, the layering and building of imagery in a novel "pulls it together" ("Interview (1984)" 322). In a poem or a novel this repetition of images increases their "potency" (Ondaatje, "Interview (1984)" 322). Literary critics such as Fotios Sarris have described how this recurrence can achieve what Ondaatje intends. Sarris shows how images of light and darkness in In The Skin of a Lion suggest the aesthetics and ideology of seventeenth-century tenebrism. By maintaining a descriptive pattern that recalls the technique of painters such as Caravaggio, Ondaatje appropriates the tenebrists' radical goal of humanizing the subjects of art and contributes to the structural integrity of his novel: the repetition of tenebristic forms is one aspect of "a densely patterned novel" that is "made up of interwoven strands of recurring imagery" (Sarris 183).

Readers are challenged to be attentive to the meticulous patterning that runs through both Ondaatje's novels and poetry. The remembrance of a detail can illuminate an entire history. In In the Skin of a Lion, Alice Gull's facial scar provides strong circumstantial evidence that she is the unidentified nun who is swept off the Bloor Street Viaduct near the beginning of the novel. She is identified only as "the one [nun] with the

small scar against her nose" (Ondaatje, Skin 33). This realization establishes a stronger narrative relationship between Book 1 and Book 2. It explains, for instance, why ill fortune leads to Alice's death near the end of the novel: the nun "was always falling into windows, against chairs. She was always unlucky" (Ondaatje, Skin 33). In Ondaatje's book of poetry, The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, a documentary photograph of three cavalrymen preparing a grave becomes particularly suggestive through the observation of an otherwise cryptic detail. Remembering that Azariah F. Wild's death occurred a few pages earlier, a reader might assume that the two letters that appear at the top of the wooden grave marker, "LD," are part of Wild's frontier epitaph (Ondaatje, Collected 8; Ondaatje, Collected 13). The metafictional joke, however, stems from the fact that the reader should also know that the outlaw's body is already "on ice" and has been shipped back to Washington (Ondaatje, Collected 8). The "LD" stands for the wild card that is crucial to the reader's provisional insight into Ondaatje's reconception of the Billy myth, that lucky circumstance or clue that will also lead to the completion of Garret's search for Billy and the lucky card that will complete the poker game that Garret's posse plays in anticipation.

Ondaatje will also use this kind of wild card to create a metanarrative that will help his readers link each of his works into a cohesive *oeuvre*. Readers apprehend not only the story of a book of fiction or poems but also decipher a story that leads to the 'apprehension' of Ondaatje--as a distinct

authorial voice. Like the literary histories of an anthology, Ondaatje creates mnemonic links between his writings by foregrounding a variety of commonly reworked motifs and stories. These reworkings and repetitions are more than merely a product of a writer interested in a favorite repertoire of literary symbol. Although this is definitely part of the story, Ondaatje transforms this fact about writing in general into a consciously foregrounded characteristic of *his* writings. Coming Through Slaughter, for instance, contains a strong allusion to "Walking to Bellrock," a poem in the "Pig Glass" section of There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do. Police detective, Webb, interviews Cornish, a member of cornetist Buddy Bolden's former jazz band, as part of his attempt to intuit why Buddy has fled his family and his celebrated position within the local New Orleans jazz scene. Asked if he has a photograph of Buddy, Cornish remembers vaguely that one was taken by Bellocq. Ondaatje spells Cornish's response like "Bellrock" without the "r" and then is coy enough to ask the reader if something is missing. Cornish states that the photographer's name was "Bellock or *something*" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 50; emphasis added). This almost-homonym of "Bellrock" is Ondaatje's way of emphasizing how details can be used provisionally to create several stories. A wild card that can be imagined into several narrative roles, the hybridized word "Bellock" is part of the story of Coming Through Slaughter and the "plot" of Ondaatje's career of literary production. This conception of story-making as a

provisional reconstruction of discrete fact is reemphasized in the next line where the true spelling of Bellocq's name is reproduced, self-contained and removed spatially from the rest of the text, a neutered unimaginative piece of decontextualized information:

"Bellocq."

Once contextualized by a knowledge of Ondaatje's library of devices, however, reading becomes a form of sudden archeological discovery where the unearthing of an intertextual fragment reveals the various layers of story that have been laid like strata upon that very same spot. It is difficult to represent this three dimensional narrative structure or to capture the excitement that follows its sudden discovery. In the following pages I will suggest some of the points in Ondaatje's texts where these extraordinary experiences might occur.

In Coming Through Slaughter, his first volume of prose fiction, Ondaatje inserts clear references to key poems in The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, The Dainty Monsters, Rat Jelly, and the "Pig Glass" section in There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do. The novel's two principal characters, Webb, the police detective, and Buddy Bolden, the cornet player in hiding, are rough approximations of Garret and The Kid. This link is strengthened by a rewriting in Slaughter of one of Ondaatje's own treatments of the Billy myth. Webb's first meeting with Buddy's wife, Nora Bass, is a subtle reenactment of the perspectival shifts that are offered by

three documentary photographs reproduced in The Collected Works of Billy the Kid. The ranch cabin depicted in these three daguerreotypes is the wild card that Garret has been looking for. It is here that Billy is surprised by Garret and slain in a gun battle. The first photograph is shot at close range, another at medium, and the third at a distance from the cabin.

When Webb leaves Nora's house he looks like a gunslinger, like Garret poised to draw a six-shooter upon his bounty: "Webb steps backward off the doorstep with his hands in his pockets" and "walks slowly backwards down the four steps" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 21). Having alluded to the cabin, Ondaatje simulates the shutter aperture of the camera through Nora's opening and closing of the front door. With Webb still on the threshold, Nora opens the door--interior shot made with lens wide open to take in all the interior light and maintain a short depth of field. Once Webb has taken a few steps back from the threshold, Nora closes the door to the narrow width of her face--medium shot with the diaphragm set for a medium depth of field. When Webb is at a distance the door closes completely and we have a properly focused and exposed long shot. The scene is reworked again in Running in the Family. In a Dutch governor's mansion in Ceylon where Ondaatje begins his investigation of his family history, he encounters (as do his readers) a ghost of his textual past. In a "twin" (Ondaatje, Running 25) to the room in which he sits listening, like a detective, to the stories of his sister and aunt, Ondaatje confronts what seems like the skeletal remains of Billy still

clinging to the cabin bed where he was shot by Garret. Ondaatje sees "the skeletons of beds without their mattresses" and leaves the scene in the manner of Webb, "retreat[ing] from the room without ever turning . . . [his] back on it" (Running 25).

Ondaatje also reworks a familiar scene that he uses to stage the dilemmas of literary influence. Characterized by an author figure and a reformulation of the trick-with-a-knife motif, a rotating fan, Ondaatje tests several of his characters' courage to risk a move outside convention, to stick their writer's hands into the spinning fan that represents the chaotic nature of real history once it is freed from the well-known conventions of storytelling. Ondaatje's description of the N. Joseph Shaving Parlor, where Buddy works as a barber, recalls the creative milieu of Wallace Stevens's bedroom in "Dates." Stevens "shaves" his poems "clean" like Bolden shaving and shaping the hair of his customers (Ondaatje, There's a Trick 41). Stevens's construction of poetic lines is analogous to Buddy's cutting of hair. The bedroom fan that cools Stevens as he writes "The Well Dressed Man with a Beard" is reconfigured in the parlor as a ceiling fan that hangs above Buddy as he shaves and shapes his well-dressed customers with their hair "swept by this thick almost liquid wind" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 47). Stevens is distinguished from Bolden, however, by his response to the formal strictures of artistic convention. Whereas Stevens tests his own abilities to create a novel poetic form, Bolden caters instead to "the vanity of

others" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 48). Buddy may imagine a garish improvisation of his craft, dreaming "of the neck. Gushing onto the floor and his white apron" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 48), but he checks these imaginings through a stifling adherence to professional decorum, an oppressiveness that he conveys by describing how the ceiling fan does not allow him to "relax and stretch up" his body. Stevens, by contrast, writes with a hand that has been severed, detached from a mind that is filled with a knowledge of literary tradition, which paralyses spontaneous expression. Stevens is described as a detached observer of his hand's creativity: "and he saw his hand was saying / the mind is never finished, no, never" (Ondaatje, There's a Trick 41). Running in the Family opens with a ceiling fan rotating quietly above Ondaatje as he sits in the Dutch governor's mansion in Ceylon at the beginning of a trip and a novel that will attempt to exorcise the ghosts of his familial and literary forebears. As in "Dates" and Coming Through Slaughter, the scene suggests the imminent challenge to the writer to innovate a style that will successfully structure the inherent disorder of experience:

> No matter how mechanical the fan is in its movement the textures of air have no sense of the metronome. The air reaches me unevenly with its gusts against my arms, face, and this paper. (Ondaatje, Running 24).

Different characters traverse common landscapes. The landscape described in "Walking to Bellrock" is traversed by the characters and the plot of In the Skin of a Lion. Patrick

is born into "the small village of Bellrock" (Ondaatje, Skin 53). Like Ondaatje and Stan Dragland who follow the river from a rural to a more urban setting in the poem, Patrick becomes "an immigrant to the city" (Ondaatje, Skin 53). Their following of the current like an "easy fucking stupid plot to town" (Ondaatje, Trick 83) suggests Patrick's following of Ambrose Small to Bellrock in the fashion of an "easy" and "stupid" detective novel.

Different landscapes are traversed by versions of the same characters. Although differentiated enough to fit seamlessly into their immediate textual surroundings, Ondaatje's characters share so many traits and gestures that it is difficult not to imagine Ondaatje as a kind of ventriloquist who dresses his hand in various costumes while maintaining a common voice. At times, Ondaatje is not subtle about his characters' emigration from one literary milieu to another. Billy the Kid, dead at the age of twenty-two, is reincarnated as the Jazz protagonist of Coming Through Slaughter. Webb recalls that "Bolden had never spoken of his past. To the people here [in Storyville] he was a musician who arrived in the city at the age of twenty-two," a connection that Ondaatje emphasizes typographically by having the passage appear on page twenty-two (Slaughter 22). In In the Skin of a Lion, Temelcoff is transformed from a bridge worker into a baker between Book 1 and Book 2. Caravaggio and Hana step from 1930s Toronto in In the Skin of a Lion to the wartime landscapes of The English Patient.

Characters such as Nora's mother, Lalla and Mervyn Ondaatje, Hazen Lewis and Cato, Kirpal Singh and even the figure of Ondaatje-as-narrator share so many idiosyncratic behaviours that they suggest multiple perspectives on a common stock Ondaatje character. Whereas Billy will walk from one book into another, an encounter with Lalla or Lewis will suggest segues to other scenes that typify characters who reside in other Ondaatje writings. The archeology of Ondaatje's own literary history is apparent. In Coming Through Slaughter, Nora Bass's mother parodies the artist figure described in "Birds for Janet--The Heron." Her story about the water turkey is an absurd trivialization of the tragedy that underlies artistic experience outlined in Ondaatje's poem. Both birds attempt to penetrate the essential center of everyday experience represented by the unchartable movements of water. The turkey plummets into the water like the heron but in an absurd twist leaves "hardly a ripple" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 25) while the heron meets the surface in a "dull / burst of fur" (Ondaatje, There's a Trick 2) Both, however, penetrate a body of water and die, the turkey for lack of any thought of what to do next, the heron for despair of failure. The water turkey "would hide by submerging completely and walk along the river bottom, forgetting to breath, and so drown" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 25); in 'Birds for Janet" we find "the path / of a heron's suicide / tracks left empty / walking to the centre of the lake" (Ondaatje, There's a Trick 3). The parallel is ingenious because it enacts Ondaatje's conception

of the writer as a creative refashioner of other stories. It is as if Nora's mother heard Ondaatje's poem and distorted and embellished the facts like a good storyteller: the heron becomes a water turkey; the lake, a river; the deliberate suicide, an attempted escape.

In Running in the Family, Michael and Lalla Ondaatje assume the role of this ideal storyteller. Like Mrs. Bass, both tell outrageous tales that underplay tragedy for the sake of humour. Ondaatje begins his quasi-autobiographical novel by relating the story of Lalla's death. Like Mrs. Bass, he recounts it as a party joke: she dies from "Natural causes" (Ondaatje, Running 23), drowned in a Ceylonese monsoon flood. Lalla's death invokes both Bass's yarn and Ondaatje's poem. She dies in a flood and loses her nest like another of Bass's imaginary birds, "208 [playing] cards moved ahead of her like a disturbed nest as she was thrown downhill still comfortable and drunk" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 25; Ondaatje, Running 128). Her drowning is preceded by text that it is saturated with images of blueness and death. Her brother Vere lies "almost comatose on the bluebird print sofa" (Ondaatje, Running 127). Visiting "Moon Plains," Lalla is "drowned in blue and gold flowers" (Ondaatje, Running 126), the surface color of water and reflected moonlight. She pantomimes the heron's suicidal dive by riding Vere's motorcycle with "her arms spread out like a crucifix" (Ondaatje, Running 126). Lalla is both storyteller and storyteller's subject. Her final moments replay the point of view of a diving heron and its prey. As she is carried

along on the monsoon flood, she shares the perspective of the diving heron and water turkey rushing at what seems like the surface of a body of water: "and then there was the great blue ahead of her" (Ondaatje, Running 129). Yet she is also described as "bait" that sees this "great blue" as a "sheaf of wheat, like a large eye that peered toward her" (Ondaatje, Running 129). Lalla is square in the sights of a diving heron in the midst of "The reach / fingers stretching / backbones" (Ondaatje, "Birds for Janet" 2).

In In the Skin of a Lion the construction of Ambrose Small also alludes to these other Ondaatje characterizations. Like Lalla's death, Small's suicide is borrowed directly from Ondaatje's poem. He enacts the heron's suicide in a descriptive sequence that parallels the stages of the heron's plummet. The outline of Small's knees and raised elbows as he sits in "lotus position, bare-chested, his hands moving over his face sensuously rubbing the front of his skull" (Ondaatje, Skin 214) recalls the final moment before the heron's impact where "Reflections make them an hourglass" (Ondaatje, "Birds for Janet" 2). Small completes his silent theater by simulating the heron's impact. His hand having "discovered his right ear" (Ondaatje, Skin 214), Small is incarnated as the heron, the outline of a bird's bill ending at his elbow. He leans forward "in a long grace-attempted bow" as a form of plummet and we listen to his dreams of holding the elusive character of reality fast within his mouth: he is

> A heron stretching his head further underwater, the eyes open within the cold flow, open for the fish that could then be raised into the air and dropped in the tunnel of the heron's blue throat. (Ondaatje, Skin 214)

As in Ondaatje's poem, Small is repelled off the surface. Small dies on his back looking at the moonlight that also illuminates "Birds for Janet":

> his upper torso bent forward long and athletic and the mouth of the heron touched the blue wood floor and his head submerged under the water and pivoted and saw in the fading human light a lamp that was the moon. (Ondaatje, Skin 214)

By alluding to his own works, Ondaatje theatricalizes his own eclipsed historical position as a writer, a theme that is picked up and reworked repeatedly at the narrative level within his poetry and fiction. This narcissistic literary borrowing also extends to Ondaatje's theatricalization of his own public literary persona. As in his texts, Ondaatje demonstrates a consciousness that he writes against a background of various histories, those of textual tradition and those of authorship. This self-awareness is demonstrated by his frequent subversion of various commonly-held assumptions about writing and writers. These tactics aim to protect his writings from the banalization of mundane literary comment.

Ondaatje attempts to stifle the use of his biography as a template for criticism and interpretation by maintaining a

tight control over the availability of biographical material. A glance at Ed Jewinski's unauthorized biography, Michael Ondaatje: Express Yourself Beautifully, demonstrates the degree to which this paucity of information is a part of Ondaatje scholarship. The only extended treatment of its kind, Jewinski's book is constructed primarily from newspaper interviews, quotations from Running in the Family, and the testimony of two former intimates estranged enough to volunteer personal information, his former wife, Kim, and his brother, Christopher. When Ondaatje does offer biographical facts, they are left as absurd and entertaining false clues. In biographical entries in Canadian Who's Who and Contemporary Authors, Ondaatje claims that he is the breeder of "The Sydenham Spaniel" and the inventor of the "Dragland hog feeder," clearly playful references to scenes in his early poetry and to Canadian poet and friend Stan Dragland (qtd. in Jewinski 10).

Questions about literary influence are deflected in a similar manner. Ondaatje will obscure or mythologize the roots and character of his own creative process. In an interview in 1994 with Catherine Bush, Ondaatje leaves a Byzantine trail of references designed to mislead and frustrate.

> The books I carry with me, that I build a literary home out of, may be essays and short stories by writers like Guy Davenport or John Berger. They may be novels like DeLillo's The Names or Elizabeth Smart's By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept,

> Michael Herr's Dispatches and The Big Room, Graham Swift's Waterland, Henry Roth's Call It Sleep, The Ten Thousand Things by Maria Dermout, Ian McEwan's The Child in Time, Faulkner's Light in August, Calvino's The Baron in the Trees, Ford's Parade's End, Joseph Roth's The Radetsky March, Fielding Dawson, Alice Munro, John Hawkes, Marilynne Robinson's Housekeeping, Evan Connell, Alastair Macleod, Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison's Beloved, Russell Banks, David Malouf's An Imaginary Life, Murray Bail's Homesickness and Holden's Performance, Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea, Wright Morris, Salman Rushdie, Cormac McCarthy, Achebe, Armah, Kafka, Philip K. Dick. There are many more, of course--strange, mad company. (Ondaatje, "Michael Ondaatje" 248)

Like many authors Ondaatje resists others' attempts to look for the absolute origins of his writings. He differs, however, in that instead of merely rebuffing the cultural media with sarcasm or similar defensive strategies, Ondaatje uses the occasion as an opportunity to foreground the themes of his novels. In a joking and self-conscious way, Ondaatje enacts his own writings by representing his writing practice in the terms he uses to describe the narrative attempts of his characters. For instance, he will refer to his own poetry as a potentially "blunt instrument" (Ondaatje, "CPR" 6) recalling the analogy that he makes between writing and cutting. He

"circles" his characters and plot elements in order to get to know them the way that Bellocq walks around Webb or the way that "Webb walk[s] around Bellocq for several days" (Ondaatje, Slaughter 51, 56). Ondaatje states that "[S]mall discoveries are for me the first principles, and I try to circle around them and collect them and piece them together in some kind of mural or novel. Magpie work" (Ondaatje, "Michael Ondaatje" 242). When explaining the sources of his fiction he invokes the symbol of water that he has used repeatedly to suggest the disorder of experience: "I discovered a whole ocean of stories" (Ondaatje, "Michael Ondaatje" 239). As in his autocanonical references, Ondaatje always points the reader back to the particular and often distinctive tropes of his writings.

Ondaatje seeks to underscore the various forms of his own public expression, whether they be literature, interview, or photograph, with a common set of attributes that mark them with his distinct authorial identity. The impression of this distinct literary signature is evident even when Ondaatje is confronted directly with the fact of literary history and his relationship to it. As the editor of From Ink Lake, a Canadian anthology of short stories, Ondaatje responds to the literary expressions of other authors by making them refer, as a group, to a common set of issues that permeate his own writings. Deviating from the standard generic conventions of a historical anthology, Ondaatje arranges his selections as a loosely-assembled series of sketches that treat the same general story from multiple points of view. The collection is arranged

thematically; its first and last entry, by the same author, constitute an introduction and a conclusion. The archetypal story of From Ink Lake is that of a character, like the titular character of Atwood's "The Man From Mars," who plays the role of an uninitiated observer who comes to discover and understand different aspects of the historical, ideological, and mythical national construct called "Canada." These individual stories do not attempt to represent Canada *per se* but rather thematize the issue of representation and identity as it arises from an individual's experience of the nation. Not surprisingly, this is exactly the issue that concerns Ondaatje-as-anthologist in the anthology's introduction. After quoting an epigraph by W.S. Merwin, Ondaatje writes that these

> lines about a nineteenth-century geologist seem an apt warning to anyone who would try to represent the best writing of a whole country in one book. An anthologist goes mad trying to be fair and dutiful and must at some point relinquish that responsibility. My intent in this collection is to give instead an angular portrait of a time and place. (Ink Lake xiii)

Faced with reconciling his own interests with those of national literary history, Ondaatje emphasizes that the collection is really his own "take" on the history of Canadian short fiction and this tradition's relationship to the representation of Canada. Like his autocanonical references and his portrayal of his public literary persona, this "angular portrait" is

characterized by his use of a common set of images intended to inscribe his distinct authorial identity; ideas of "madness" and its relationship to efforts of representation (Bolden), photography (Billy the Kid), and, in the epigraph, the "one-armed explorer" (Stevens, Billy and others) inscribe Ondaatje's lament for a distinct authorial narrative over the literary and national histories of Canada.

Chapter II: Anthologizing Alternative Canadian Canons: The Canadian Forget Me Not for MDCCCXXXVII (1837) and From Ink Lake (1990)

> [W]hat if we made a virtue out of our fence-sitting, bet-hedging sense of the difficult doubleness of being Canadian yet North American, of being Canadian yet part of a multinational, global political economy?
>
> —Linda Hutcheon, Splitting Images (vii)

In 1963 an immigrant from Eastern Europe was given an English-Canadian anthology of fiction, George E. Nelson's Cavalcade of the North, and told that this was where he should begin his mastery of a new language. Words were underlined dutifully in pencil: the word "outfit" on the first page of Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising, the word "kissing" in Mazo de la Roche's Jalna, the words "Yankee" and "a-drinkin' tea" in an excerpt from Thomas Chandler Haliburton's The Clockmaker. But there was, of course, more to learn than just vocabulary. What my father experienced that day in Montréal was a codified image of his new country, one moment of many that would help to define the identity of his new nation as he attempted to redefine his own. In the anthology's prose essays and fiction there was a cavalcade of cultural discourses "about Canada by Canadians" (Costain 8) that addressed a range of nationalist anxieties. For Thomas B. Costain, former editor of Maclean's and author of the anthology's introduction, these anxieties ranged from the epic such as "the two sides to the story of the expulsion of the Acadians" (9) to the anecdotal: "They [non-

Canadians] do not know, for instance, that the telephone was invented in Brantford, Ontario, my home town, and not in Boston" (9). Novel, short story, biography, and history enfolded Costain and the new Canadian in a moment of narrative that delineated both a specific concept and the terms of membership of this 'imagined community' called "Canada."

Conflations of national politics and literature in Canadian national anthologies have had a profound influence on the construction of the canon. E. H. Dewart's statement that "A national literature is an essential element in the formation of national character" (Selections ix) is well-known and the anthology that it introduces, his Selections from Canadian Poets (1864), has been designated by many Canadian critics as a founding document of the English-Canadian literary tradition.[7] I am interested in how elements of this literary nationalist rhetoric tend to resurface even in the most recent nationally-focused collections. One can observe an invocation of a colonial discourse, consolidated after Confederation, that involves notions about the progressive nature of history and a sense of the essential significance of Canada's geography and natural resources. Although quoted in new ways, this rhetoric of anthology-making is still invoked to lend an aura of authenticity to national collections.[8] It remains a means of "authorizing"[9] selections as part of a continuous and coherent literary tradition that claims to represent the unrepresentable, the essential character of a diverse nation.

I hope to cast these literary nationalist strategies into relief by focusing my study on two anthologies, one that predates this legitimating rhetoric and another that renders an ironic commentary on its hundred-year-old legacy. My reading of John Simpson's The Canadian Forget Me Not for MDCCCXXXVII (1837) will help to demonstrate how early Canadian anthologies such as Dewart's reflected one side of a vigorous debate about the value of a range of affective genres and their most popular vehicle, imaginative fiction. Simpson's collection of romantic, sentimental, gothic, and sensational writings provides us with a glimpse of the popular bourgeois literary tastes of early nineteenth-century Canada, a spectrum of literary preferences in fiction and poetry that was being increasingly satisfied by a growing number of periodicals and books originating from within Canada and abroad (Gerson 37).

Although clearly repudiating many of the characteristics of a "vigorous" (Matthews 131) indigenous ballad and lyric tradition, Simpson's collection reflects a conception of literary value that is not unrelated to these populist canons. Its concern with the satisfaction rather than the formation of literary taste as well as its representations of a local scene and a middle class consciousness make The Canadian Forget Me Not a rare representation of nineteenth-century Canadian middlebrow taste and politics. The vehement rejection of these popular genres of literature by early Canadian anthologists represents a rarification of the canon that involved a further limitation of what genres, styles, and thematics could be

deemed legitimately "national." I will show how this conception of representivity reflected an equally conservative vision of Canadian national life. Early Canadian literary anthologies forwarded a conception of a Canadian national historical *telos* that heralded an inexorable economic and political change without accommodating its attendant shifts in cultural authority.

Michael Ondaatje's anthology of Canadian short stories, From Ink Lake (1990), is an intentionally ironic commentary on the ruins of this unified theory of Canadian literary and political history. I will demonstrate how the themes, styles, and organization of Ondaatje's selections attempt to correct this history of literary and political neglect.[10] From Ink Lake represents marginalized Canadian perspectives both within its selections and through its inclusion of never-before-anthologized writings. Indeed, Ondaatje incorporates literary pieces that do not fall within the short story genre and so, unlike earlier national collections, he privileges marginal Canadian voices at the expense of gate-keeping aesthetic criteria. Ondaatje's From Ink Lake reflects Charles Altieri's ideal notion of a canon as a body of writing that encompasses a wide range of "contrastive" values (Altieri 56). By placing these marginalized selections beside ones more typical of the mainstream Canadian canon, Ondaatje provides a representation of the kind of archive necessary for canon revision while also encouraging a dialectical reading strategy that would complete a more democratic model of literary tradition.

Since Ondaatje's collection is presented as a parodic repartee to the legacy of ethnic, racial, and gender assumptions of early Canadian literary anthologies and histories, it also exemplifies Linda Hutcheon's definition of a distinctly Canadian postmodernism. Ondaatje's introductory remarks and his alternative editorial vision serve to foreground his selections as a narrative pastiche that thematizes its own production, selection, and reception in a conservative and referential way. From Ink Lake participates in the contradictory acts of identifying and then undercutting the prevailing values and conventions of the national Canadian anthology in order "to provoke a questioning . . . [and] a challenging of 'what goes without saying' in our culture" (Hutcheon, Canadian 3). The anthology emblematizes the profoundly ethical and educative function of the Canadian postmodern by offering a series of Canadian literary snap shots that nevertheless resist a single notion of national identity. Even in the thematic preoccupation of its selections there is a mixture of the conservative and the radical; there is both a flirtation with the possibility of mimesis and identification--historically the epistemological claim of Canadian national anthologies--and a reminder of the incommensurable, irreducible qualities of the individual experience. Like my father's first underlined words of vocabulary, From Ink Lake enacts a literary cultural archeology that engenders both a desire for identification and a bewilderment that reemphasizes one's position as an uninitiated reader. Unlike collections such as

Nelson's, Ondaatje's From Ink Lake makes a case for a canon of process, one that believes in a full range of the constantly changing cavalcade of voices that can be called "Canadian."

* * *

The early Canadian national canon was consolidated very quickly. In 1864, E. H. Dewart, "Canada's first anthologist" (Lochhead ix), prefaced his Selections from Canadian Poets with an account of the difficulties of compiling a nationally representative collection without the guidance of acceptable Canadian precedents:

> The fact that I entered on an untrodden path, without any way-marks to guide me, necessarily caused me a vast amount of labour, and an extensive correspondence; as, in many instances, both poets and poetry had to be discovered by special research. (Selections vii)

Dewart's account of his own project in a language evocative of a spiritual quest and the labour of a trail-blazing pioneer was not inappropriate even though his anthology was not the first to call for the establishment of a distinctive Canadian literature. The first known claim of this kind was made by John Simpson, editor of The Canadian Forget Me Not for MDCCCXXXVII, a single edition literary annual published twenty-seven years earlier. In his dedication to Sir Francis Bond Head, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, Simpson wrote:

> It is . . . with pride and pleasure that this, the first work of its kind in the colony, is placed under the fostering care of Your Excellency; and although

> small its claims upon, and humble its pretensions to the patronage it solicits, yet, like the star that ushers in the morning, it may be the harbinger of the day of Canadian literature. ([4-5])

In so far as a canon is "a sanctioned or accepted body of related works," however, the claims of later Canadian critics and literary historians for Selections as a watershed are justified since it alone was successful in beginning a web of literary canonical reference whose cultural influence we still feel in recent representations of the Canadian national canon. The Canadian Forget Me Not, as well as two other anthologies published prior to Dewart's, The Canadian Temperance Minstrel (1842) and The Canadian Christian Offering (1848), failed to influence directly later constructions of Canadian literary value.[11] The different genre, class, and religious-ideological canons of Canadian literature from which they drew their selections did not offer a serviceable template upon which to build a national tradition. Embodying a portrait of Canadian literature that was dissonant with the critical tradition that Dewart helped to found, it is not surprising that these three anthologies have yet to be acknowledged in Canadian literary histories.

Selections from Canadian Poets, by contrast, became a common point of reference for early Canadian anthologists even as they revised Dewart's initial map of Canadian literature. Subsequent collections cited the anthology by name, reflected its main organizational tropes and logocentrisms, and used it

to help formulate an authoritative body of writers representative of the pre-Confederation era. Late and turn-of-the-century editors saw their national anthologies as refinements to a developing tradition that began with Dewart. Of course, the influence of Dewart's anthology was diffused as each new collection condensed and periodized further his initial literary evaluative matrix. The place of Selections in the genealogy of the early national literary canon and the interrelationship of the collections that it helped to spawn, however, is clear.

In Songs of the Great Dominion: Voices from the Forests and Waters, the Settlements and Cities of Canada (1889), which saw both multiple British and Canadian editions, William Douw Lighthall referred to Dewart's anthology as an authoritative compilation of pre-confederation poetry. Lighthall writes that it is a collection "which have [sic] ever remained the standard book of reference for that period" (xxxv). Dewart's collection was praiseworthy for preserving an earlier Canadian literary heritage that now provided Lighthall with a convenient marker against which to measure current literary progress:

> it [Selections] has become antiquated, no longer represents what is being done, and most of the best authors such as Roberts, Miss Crawford, Hunter-Duvar, Talon-Lespérance, and "Fidelis"[12] have come into the field since its publication. (xxxv)

These new writers also provided Lighthall with an opportunity to re-periodize and re-thematize national literary development

so that it reflected more literally the imagined national space. Dewart's tripartite thematic division of Canadian literary history did not refer clearly enough to what Lighthall considered to be the salient characteristics of Canadian politics, geography, and life. Although Selections contained both a significant quantity of "Descriptive and National" poetry and a section of "Sacred and Reflective" pieces intended to embody what Dewart saw as the nation's ideal spiritual character, Lighthall felt compelled to define the collection as "a purely literary anthology" (xxxv). That Dewart was torn between competing definitions of literary value was demonstrated by the fact that nearly half of the anthology's selections were classified under the category of "Miscellaneous Pieces."[13] To Lighthall, Dewart's split between writings valorized for their reference to the collective life of the nation and those included on the basis of a notion of 'universal' literary merit must have made Selections from Canadian Poets seem not only outmoded but like a deracinated attempt at national mimesis.

Lighthall demonstrated no such equivocation when confronted with a precursor of what A. J. M. Smith would later define as the "Native" and "Cosmopolitan" traditions (McCarthy 36; A. Smith 3-31). Songs of the Great Dominion is organized with a view to making literary history reflect further national economic and political narratives of progress. Preferring to avoid universalized categories that were not clearly referential of Canada, Lighthall's contents page conflates

further a corpus of national literature with the ideological and experiential life of a nation on the road to imperial greatness. His headings announce their categorizations of Canadian life and history like individual exhibitions in a Canadian version of the Crystal Palace: "The Imperial Spirit," "The New Nationality," "The Indian," "The Voyageur and Habitant," "Settlement Life," "Sports and Free Life," "The Spirit of Canadian History," "Places," and "Seasons" (Lighthall vii-xix). Where Dewart needed to balance conceptions of 'universal' literary value and specifically Canadian-focused writing, Lighthall unabashedly endorsed this kind of celebratory mimesis as its own legitimate criterion of repute. He writes that his collection is

> an imperfect presentation of Canadian poetry from a purely literary point of view, on account of the limitation of treatment; for it is obvious that if only what illustrates the country and its life *in a distinctive way* be chosen, the subjective and unlocal literature must be necessarily passed over, entraining the omission of most of the poems whose merit lies in perfect finish. (xxxiv)

In Lighthall's engagement of Dewart's anthology we find the beginnings of a conversation that helps to resituate the significance of a body of individual texts into a discourse that names a national Canadian literature. Every site of literary publicity such as anthologies, literary histories, bibliographies, and reviews recast individual literary texts

into signs in a secondary historical and evaluative discourse. What we can observe in the literary relations between early Canadian literary anthologies, however, is an emerging consensus about what this secondary discourse will actually consist of. Minor disagreements between individual collections serve nonetheless to augment and demonstrate the cultural currency of a specific way of thinking about Canadian literature. Debate moves along the same axes of inquiry and reinvokes a similar set of issues that may revise but does not threaten the cardinal evaluative assumptions or their driving ideological functions. Indeed, they exercise their canonizing prerogative not only on individual literary texts but also on each other; they authorize and neglect a canon of secondary literature.

In their discussion about the constitutive values of a national art we witness the discursive construction of a museum of critical comment and an authorization of its curators. Lighthall authorized his perspective in part by placing it within a genealogy that included not only Dewart's Selections but also "Seranus"'s[14] The Canadian Birthday Book, "a miniature survey of the chief verse, both French and English" (xxxv), published on the twentieth anniversary of Confederation. T. H. Rand set his Treasury of Canadian Verse (1900) within the tradition of a familiar body of works, which helped to define the parameters of his anthology:

> The following special works have been of service: Selections from Canadian Poets (1864), by Edward

> Hartley Dewart; The Canadian Birthday Book (1887), by Seranus; [and] Songs of the Great Dominion (1889), by William Douw Lighthall. (xii)

E. A. Hardy's introduction to his Selections from the Canadian Poets (1909) reads like an annotated bibliography of these same authorized sites of early canon formation. Hardy's introduction is especially appropriate since the literary history that he presents in his collection is determined less by aesthetic or thematic criteria than by the history of anthologization. Phases of Canadian literary development are suggested by the publication of individual anthologies. Canadian literature is historicized on the basis of how it came to be preserved.

Hardy must have found it difficult to determine moments in Canada's political history that could act as convenient literary historical markers. Confederation was an obvious choice. But the question remained of how to periodize the years between Confederation and the publication date of his collection. Hardy's answer was to divide the roughly forty-two years into two amorphous historical categories: a "Second Period" covering "about 25 to 30 years" after 1867 and a "Third Period" constituting the "last ten or fifteen years" (5). Each phase was equated and, to a large degree, defined by a previous Canadian national collection. Dewart's Selections, for instance, represented the literary production of the "pioneer and the first generation or two of his descendants," a period from which "few names . . . are likely to live in Canadian

literature" (Hardy 5). The few that Hardy chose to represent this period of literary adolescence, however, demonstrate Dewart's influence: all the authors and half the poems included in this section had already appeared in Selections from Canadian Poets.

Lighthall's Songs of the Great Dominion helps to determine the period immediately following Confederation, "the most prolific period in our history so far" (Hardy 5). Correlating literary creativity to a founding national moment is not a surprising move in a canon that attempts to present a literature of national self-definition. Indeed, Lighthall is in part responsible for the promulgation of this discourse: he lauds "the tone of exultation and confidence which the singers have assumed since Confederation" (xxxv). Finding a suitable end marker for this second phase, however, proves to be more difficult. Hardy resorts to American literary developments. He buttresses the logic of his periodization by relating his second grouping to American writers whose reputations were connected to their perceived articulation of a distinctively American idiom: "There is an interesting parallel here to the period in American literature of Longfellow, Lowell, Emerson, Whittier, Bryant, Holmes, Poe, and others" (Hardy 5).[15] Hardy's "Third Period" is suggested by a distillation of Rand's Treasury of Canadian Verse. This phase represents "the last fifteen years" of literary production even while "Most of the chief writers of the second period are still living and enriching our literature with new work" (Hardy 5). By

presenting it as a discrete period, Hardy suggests that it is somehow different even though he admits that "Few new voices of note are heard" (5). The paradox seems less important for Hardy than the literary historical *trompe d'oeil* of national creative progress.

Selections from the Canadian Poets makes clear the emerging maturity of a Canadian national canonical discourse. An important moment in the development of any discourse of repute is when it can function as its own independent structuring agent without being referenced directly to the contexts of its production and legitimation. Unlike Dewart researching to create an organizational rationale in the midst of an "untrodden path, without any way-marks" (Selections vii), Hardy's schema is governed by an already existing secondary literature. Not only do his choices bear the deep marks of influence, but the narrative of their importance has also come to reflect an institutional history that is presented as organic and "real." Institutional interventions in literary history are reified and assume an illusory essential quality.

It is perhaps significant that Hardy's Selections from the Canadian Poets was intended to be a pedagogical anthology that asked the teacher of literature to "use his influence to build up a Canadian literature section in the library of his school and in the public library of his locality" (6)[16] and included suggestions for the classroom. Unlike the wide horizon of flotsam that awaited Dewart, Hardy's canon is self-evident--it is already on shore, serviceable, and domesticated. Reflecting

the needs of Hardy's model of pedagogy, questions about the national literature's significance and the reasons for its study are unconflicted and rhetorical:

> For composition such as the following might be found interesting: "Does Canadian poetry possess real merit?" "Why should Nature play so large a part in Canadian poetry?" "Does Canadian poetry voice the real feelings and aspirations of the Canadian people?" . . . Another topic . . . would be "An Historical Sketch of Canadian Poetry," elaborating the brief sketch given in this book . . . (7)

Hardy speaks from within a discursive space that has been cleared sufficiently of competing notions of literary value. Having a selection of authorized sites at his disposal, Hardy can talk about a Canadian literature in a confidently self-referential and self-enclosed way. Indeed, it is a sense of assurance that Hardy wishes to instill in his intended audience.

> Rigidly prohibit the reading of other people's criticisms of Canadian literature until the pupils have tried to do at least a little independent thinking. . . . Then encourage your students to use [the standard Canadian national anthologies and J. G. Bourinot's nationalist history Our Intellectual Strength and Weaknesses] . . . to memorize what appeals to them and to be able to discuss intelligently our Canadian writers" (Hardy 7).

The distance from the backwoods to the classroom may not have been very far in reality. The development from a clarion call to a roll call in the space of approximately forty-five years, however, suggests a consolidation of literary confidence and cultural capital that is startling to observe. The contest about the precise definition of the canon's normative values continued as did the calls for a distinctive Canadian literature. Yet, anthologists were beginning to justify their choices not only in reference to a conception of a so-called essential "Canadian-ness" that they saw as immanent in Canadian life and politics, but also in reference to a recognizable canon and the normative values reflected within its sites of institutionalization. Wilfred Campbell's introduction to The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse (1913), for instance, is academic and pertains to the theory of Canadian literature as it had been advanced in earlier anthologies. Campbell prefers to define Canadian writing as a subset of "the voice of the Vaster Britain" (viii). He offers his synthetic category as a means of resolving the inconsistencies of earlier definitions of what constitutes Canadian-ness (i.e. birth, residency, and the thematic concerns of the writing).

What is important here is that Campbell feels a responsibility to justify his choices in reference to a particular articulation of Canadian national tradition. When including a clearly British writer, the Duke of Argyll and former Governor General of Canada (1878-83), Campbell feels compelled to remark that he had "ventured, in this instance, to break the stricter

canons" (ix) that have been "claimed by many of our Anthologists and writers upon the subject" (vi). That he calls it by name and invokes the difficulties that face "the conscientious editor" (Campbell vi) suggests that the idea of the national canon had attained a cultural power that anthologists would be forced to reckon with when claiming to represent the national tradition. It is this consciousness about sustaining a singular definition of Canadian-ness and Canadian literature that Ondaatje rebukes as an "irresponsible anthologist" (xviii) in From Ink Lake .

II

A Canadian canon of literature was named within a generation and a half. But as a so-called "national" tradition, one with hopes for a connection to a mass readership, this self-acclamation embodied a paradox. The official canon advanced in early Canadian national literary anthologies and histories attempted to represent the essential nature of Canada by advancing an aesthetic philosophy and a literature that was defined in opposition to emerging literary tastes and their corresponding class and economic interests. An official, public canon of Canadian literature was making gestures toward an indigenous idiom but these attempts were made with sidelong glances at the aesthetic models of central literary tradition and its promises of social and cultural respectability. It was a valorization of a cultural standard that reinforced a sense of community with British traditions

and empire. The result was a canon that revealed a double literary and social consciousness, an often negative literary cultural dialectic typical of early colonial situations that balance toward rather than away from their originating economies of cultural capital.

It is important to remember that the "remarkable consistency" of this early repertoire, as is demonstrated in the "canon currently preserved in pedagogical collections of Canadian literature" (Gerson xi), reveals more about the continuity of literary aesthetic and historical prerogatives in recent sites of canon formation than it does about the context of literary aesthetic conflict from which these works were drawn. A small canon and a small literary institution had been defined in Canada. It had its group of cultural journals, its anthologies, its debates and controversies, its published writers and its reviews, but the bridges that this nascent institution imagined between its literature and the Canadian public stopped abruptly in mid-air.[17]

According to Norman Newton, the poetry that received attention in this milieu reflected the outlook of writers and critical devotees who functioned under "an illusion . . . as to their social role" (12). Poets such as Heavysege, Sangster, Lampman, and F. G. Scott appropriated older poetic modes in order to represent a heroic, epic, and aristocratic view of Canada that was clearly out of step with the experiences and ideological predilections of all but their own particular professional class. Newton observes the consistency with which

these poets had attachments to Canadian public institutions, especially the civil service and the Protestant clergy.[18] His point is that unlike many American writers, these poets did not emerge from a milieu that encouraged a lyrical translation and embodiment of indigenous experience. Although Newton gives too short shrift to some of the more affecting aspects of nineteenth-century Canadian poetry by characterizing it as "mediocre in the best sense" with "few outstanding features" (7), he is correct in observing that it is often characterized by a pastiche-like impersonation. Sangster's "The Soldier at the Plough," for instance, is a "real museum of anomalies" (Newton 21) because its quatrains contain literary borrowings that span hundreds of years of English literary history. One finds a juxtaposition of Victorian diction and syntax, sentiment characteristic of a poet of the Romantic Revival "such as Sir Walter Scott," and the didacticism of a morality play, which is "absolutely medieval" (Newton 21). What was likely prompted by sincere nationalist and religious feeling is obscured by a public poetic decorum, which reflected both a social and a literary aesthetic conservatism.

Newton's aim to establish a socio-political context for the derivative aspects of early Canadian canonical poetry invokes a recurring colonial/post-colonial dilemma about the proper way to domesticate inherited aesthetic and linguistic codes. It is a scenario that can be found again in Canadian and other literatures that perceive themselves to be writing from the margins.[19] Yet Newton's characterization of classical

Canadian poetry as an expression of literary false consciousness also demonstrates a common problem in studies that attempt to discern a writer's intentions in regard to literary influence and innovation. Although Newton is correct in his close-readings, his suggestion of a blithe complicity with the evaluative codes of the early Canadian canon is based on a streamlined literary historical narrative that has expunged the evidence of resistance that also characterized the period. Newton's need to dismiss the poetic agency of the writers he discusses is informed by a view of early Canadian poetry that has been guided by the very canonical values that Newton critiques. This subtle tautology testifies to the power of literary historical discourses in moulding our view of the development of early Canadian writing. A blinkered valorization of the academic tradition by early Canadian national anthologies and histories obscured the influence of more individualized and indigenous poetic impulses and traditions.

On one level, Newton's discussion of influence as a manifestation of "illusion" (12) and "misconception" (8) is a reminder that writing occurs at an intersection of literary ability and an investment in a set of socially-authorized aesthetic modes. It makes clear the socio-cultural referents of "minor" canons of writing as well as suggesting a complication of *auteur* theories that ignore aspects of literary influence in order to applaud the individualistic character of literary innovation.[20] Newton is reluctant, however, to grant

that early Canadian canonical poets might have had some sense of the significance of their own stylistic choices. In his critique of F. G. Scott, where he finds "the genuinely poetic and the falsely poetic side by side," Newton suggests that "it appears that the poet does not know the difference" (22). Lampman creates poetic grotesques because

> his muddled idea both of his role and his relationship to aristocratic ideals has led him into writing his poem ["The Modern Politician"] in such a manner that it is almost rendered ineffectual. (Newton 18)

What seems overstated about assessments such as these is that they fail to acknowledge that forms of false consciousness often embody clear benefits even if they appear especially short-lived when viewed through the retrospective gaze of the literary historian.

Newton argues for a historicization of early Canadian literary production. Claiming that he is not "dealing with a form of mental illness, but with a cultural phenomenon" (23), Newton asserts that the use of these antiquated modes was the result of an unfortunate understanding shared by an elite literary institution, its limited public, and its authors:

> Many of the classical Canadian poets thought of poetry as a public as well as a private art, and they shared this view with their readers and the elite which sponsored them, or into which they had been born. (23)

This recognition of a literary evaluative economy is undercut, however, by Newton's failure to imagine the possibility that some of the most talented Canadian writers of the nineteenth century could have felt conflicted about their endorsement of the aesthetic doctrines of literary nationalism. For Newton, a poet's canonization suggests not the possibility of a reasoned attempt at literary repute but rather an unquestioning complicity in advancing the stylistic choices that have come to define the era in later literary histories. The poets become flat characters in a historical narrative that has forgotten the alternate and apocryphal wanderings of early Canadian literature.

John Matthews, in his comparative study of early Canadian and Australian literature, offers a more negotiated portrait of early Canadian writing. Like Newton, Matthews agrees that class allegiances helped to make sophisticated British literary modes an understandable choice for the development of an accomplished academic tradition in Canada. Unlike Australians, who experienced a polarization between an Anglo-centric land-owning class of graziers and a disenfranchised majority of labouring "bushworkers" (Matthews 23), Canadians had little reason to resent British class and literary hierarchies as they played themselves out on Dominion soil. The growth of a relatively prosperous, independent populace vitiated class animosities, which encouraged a conservatism in national political sentiment and an esteem for British cultural example (Matthews 24). Canadian universities reflected this respect

for British tradition by developing "an enviable reputation for sound scholarship and thorough training" that reinforced a belief in its graduates that they "were the heirs of all the ages and the inheritors of the richness of the English tradition" (Matthews 118). Like Newton, Matthews demonstrates that the cultural power of this inheritance resulted in a halting process of trial and error where poets produced both admirable and derivative adaptations in the academic tradition. Matthews goes further, however, in showing how the use of these familiar forms was not driven solely by a feeling of political and cultural solidarity with England. The Canadian subscription to this aesthetic heritage was reasonable and sincere but not as unconflicted as Newton suggests.

The appropriation of established British modes must not have seemed altogether inappropriate given the resemblance of the Canadian and European natural environments. Although subjected easily to parody in retrospect, these styles better satisfied a definition of literary authenticity and realism than may be readily imagined.[21] This is a point that Matthews illustrates with a contrast to Australian writers, who had to cope with the same literary inheritance in a vastly different physical environment. On the comparative difficulties of matching an idiom to a new national space, Matthews writes that it

> was not difficult in the case of Canada. The scenery, vast and wild as it was, was not unlike parts of the European scene. The seasons, though intensified, were

> essentially the same, and came in regular succession during the accustomed months of the year. The need for accurate differentiation did not present itself as an acute problem. In Australia it did from the beginning. The English-trained eye had few starting points from which to work. The trees shed their bark instead of their leaves; the seasons were back-to-front, and the distinction between them was not clearly marked; the native animals were like mutations from a biologist's nightmare, and the soothing generalities of a diction based upon European nature were glaringly wrong. (33)

In Canada, there were clear social and cultural motives for the emulation of British literary precedents. Yet as Matthews's comparison makes clear, the mere evidence of literary influence does not demonstrate that the early national poets were inattentive to how European traditions might be applied to the Canadian context. Within limits, the use of these older modes seemed appropriate for both socio-cultural and aesthetic reasons. Although often inhibited by the models of English literary history, it is important to note that some early Canadian poets maintained a significant measure of poetic autonomy. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how questions about the sincerity of poetic voice could not have effected a subtle Canadianization of the British inheritance even while Canadian literature was firmly within its gravitational field. There was a need to modify the idiom as the scene did not

correspond exactly with received repertoires of expression. Although the literary nationalist critical milieu demanded that Canadian poetry demonstrate a high standard of British literary sophistication, it also paid lip service to the ideal of a distinctive, mimetic literature, which implied that poets should seek an idiom that was genuinely evocative of the Canadian scene. The conflicted outcome of such paradoxical aesthetic loyalties is reflected in the literary explorations of Archibald Lampman, an academic poet who dabbled with unconventional ideas and form, and Alexander McLachlan, a populist writer who moved occasionally from a poetry inspired by a tradition of Canadian lyrics and ballads into verse that was idealistic, abstract, and reverential. Early Canadian poets did waver in and out of the spectrum of officially-sanctioned literary value. The telling irony, however, is that early Canadian national anthologies had them walking a straight line of national literary progress.

For Matthews, Lampman shows both a respectful innovation and a conservative attempt to move outside acknowledged poetic convention. His sojourns into the Ottawa backwoods occasioned a Canadian revision of stock academic diction. In poems such as "Morning on the Lievre," Lampman's "similes . . . are familiar enough, taken out of context" but when they are combined with distinctly Canadian interpretations of nature "the old images are enlivened with new meaning" (Matthews 122). Lampman's nods to convention in passages such as "like a dream" and "softly as a cloud" may border on cliché but are

transformed by their incorporation into an affecting portrayal of a scene that is palpably Canadian.

> Softly as a cloud we go,
> Sky above and sky below,
> Down the river; and the dip
> Of the paddle scarcely breaks,
> With the little silvery drip
> Of the water as it shakes
> From the blades, the crystal deep
> Of the silence of the morn,
> Of the forest yet asleep;
> And the river reaches borne
> In a mirror, purple grey
> Sheer away
> To the misty line of light,
> Where the forest and the stream
> In the shadow meet and plight,
> Like a dream. (qtd. in Matthews 121; Lampman, Poems 20)

Lampman's carving out of an authentic space even within the confines of an academic tradition demonstrates that the distinctions between derivation, influence, and innovation are especially subtle within a Canadian context where the appropriation of British models did not offend principles of poetic integrity. It shows a poet thriving within the limitations of an officially-sanctioned idiom, pushing it "as far as it would go without changing course completely" (Matthews 121). Yet as Matthews points out, this aesthetic and

evaluative code placed limits on poetic expression. Lampman was "prey to an inner conflict" (Matthews 120, 131) because his literary training could not encompass adequately a "pale socialism" and a sense of humanitarian grievance that emerged in poems such as "The Usurer," "Epitaph on a Rich Man," and "The City of the End of Things." In "The Land of Pallas," Matthews sees Lampman "try[ing] to find a solution in a visioned utopia conceived, like Morris's News from Nowhere, in largely pastoral terms" (128). The vague and misty idealism of the academic tradition could not embody Lampman's occasional forays into social protest that he demonstrated in his involvement with The Ottawa Group,[22] and in poems such as "Liberty":

> Was it for this--for this? we cry
> That you made the peoples free,
> That your vessels plough the sea
> And your buildings climb the sky;
> .....
> For there comes at last the day
> When the meanest and most poor
> Having scanned the ages' flow
> Probed his hurt, and guessed the cure
> Shall rise up and answer--No! (qtd. in Matthews 128-29; Lampman, At the Long Sault 29)

In "Liberty" Lampman expresses political and aesthetic values that were contrary to those which helped to make his nature poetry a cornerstone of the early Canadian national

canon. This is a poem that addresses a social problem without depending upon the dignified tropes of the academic style. There are no esoteric allusions, the diction and syntax are relatively simple and direct except for "scanned the ages' flow" (Lampman 29), and the political sentiment is radical and populist. It is perhaps significant that "Liberty" was published posthumously in 1925 and, as Matthews observes, did "little to enhance his reputation" (128). In this and his other poems of social protest, we can observe either self-censorship or an inability to countenance a move outside an established aesthetic. Lampman may have agreed with elite notions about what constituted proper poetic language, but this does not demonstrate that he had a misconception about the cultural significance of these literary forms. Lampman appears to have struggled consciously with the aesthetic limits of the academic tradition in order to express new ideas and, in the case of poems such as "Liberty," to reach new audiences. Matthews writes that Lampman

> knew only too well that there was a conflict between all the things he wanted to say, and the only way he knew in which to say them. As a result he was aware that he was losing touch with the group that he was most concerned to reach. (120)

The pattern of innovation and conflict in Lampman's writings suggests that he was attempting to personalize his literary inheritance. It also demonstrates that the cultural power of the academic tradition presented a difficult choice

for poets who desired both critical repute and the freedom to speak directly to a wider audience. Lampman's case indicates not a misconception about the public role of the Canadian poet but rather a sense for the practical possibilities of that role as it was defined by the elite critical doctrines of the day. Unsurprisingly, it is a literary evaluative standard that is reflected in the way that early national literary anthologies have commemorated Lampman's and other Canadian poets' writings.

The institutional basis of this conundrum is especially well-illustrated in the reception of Alexander McLachlan's poetry. Emigrating to Canada in 1840, McLachlan eventually settled in Upper Canada as a tailor. The son of a Chartist, he exhibited similar class sympathies by lecturing to mechanics institutes on the need for social justice and by writing poetry that addressed the local life and immediate concerns of the labouring class (Matthews 136). Growing out of a folk-ballad and lyric tradition, a large portion of McLachlan's verse expressed a populist vision of Canadian nationalism that concerned itself with themes such as the labouring classes' contribution to the development of the nation and with critiques of local political corruption. The fresh simplicity and directness of his poetry and its provocative ideological content won him space in the radical Toronto magazine Grip and a "large audience in Canada, particularly among the working classes" (Matthews 137). His populist sympathies did not, however, exclude him from more mainstream liberal sentiment in or outside Canada. His writings appeared in such foreign

magazines as the Scottish American Journal, the Glascow Citizen, and the British Whig. McLachlan was also friends with two Fathers of Confederation, D'Arcy McGee and George Brown, and in 1858, he presented a copy of his Lyrics to William Lyon Mackenzie (Fulton xvi, xiii).

This popular reputation, however, was at odds with the representation of McLachlan in early Canadian national literary anthologies. Dewart, Seranus, Lighthall, Rand, Hardy, and Campbell neglected the poetry that evoked too candidly McLachlan's lowly literary influences or his ties to populist political sentiment. For anthologists who were interested in advancing both a polished aesthetic and the idea of a unified body politic, McLachlan's unornamented representations of class consciousness and political satire must have seemed like the utterances of a poetic renegade. Instead, they included selections that exemplified an aspect of McLachlan that was much closer to the elite poetic and ideological norms of Canadian academicism and literary nationalism. In these writings, McLachlan 'gentrified' his popular influences by employing elevated diction. Poems were chosen for aesthetic or ideological markers that obscured their relationship to a body of work that was clearly influenced by a wider tradition of popular and populist writings. Poems such as "Old Canada; or Gee Buck Gee," which demonstrated McLachlan's adeptness with a Canadian backwoods dialect, were omitted entirely.

The contrast between the McLachlan of the popular sphere and the poet sanitized for official literary canonization is

striking. It was, however, a pattern of neglect that was not unfamiliar to the milquetoast McLachlan constructed by polite Canadian letters. Matthews observes that

> The academic critics ignored him for the most part, or, when they did notice his work, gave faint praise to the least admirable characteristics of his poetry: a vague mysticism and a tendency to over-moralize. They overlooked altogether the vigour of his pictures of life in the clearings. (Matthews 142)

Compare, for instance, a passage from "Young Canada; or, Jack's as Good's His Master," which argued for the irrelevance of elite class distinctions, with the opening lines of "God," the first poem of McLachlan's that Dewart includes in his Selections from Canadian Poets.

> Our aristocracy of toil
> Have made us what you see--
> The nobles of the forge and soil,
> With ne'er a pedigree!
> It makes one feel himself a man,
> His very blood leaps faster,
> Where wit or worth's preferred to birth,
> And Jack's as good's his master! (qtd. in Matthews 137; McLachlan, Poems 119)

McLachlan makes a direct assault on notions of privilege in a land that had more use for the nobility of cultivation than for the polite refinement of class distinction. There is a respect for manual labour and the dignity of visceral

experience. Indeed, its connections to the body are more than ideological. Although intellectual in its proclamation of a theory of social organization, its success is owed also to its humour or, in other words, its engagement of affect. The diction is simple by academic standards and especially colloquial in its use of contractions. The poem's demonstration of a pride in individual achievement evinces the local origins of a grass-roots patriotism that is also reflected in McLachlan's "The Emigrant," where after felling the first tree of his Canadian homestead, the settler remarks "'Twas a kind of sacrament; / Like to laying the foundation, / Of a city or a nation." (Matthews 139; McLachlan, Emigrant 42). In contrast to these qualities typical of the popular lyric, Dewart includes a selection of poems that are characterized by moralism and a misty idealism.

> Hail, Thou great mysterious being!
> Thou the unseen yet all-seeing,
> To Thee we call.
> How can a mortal sing thy praise,
> Or speak of all thy wondrous ways,
> God over all! (qtd. in Dewart, Selections 24)

An admiration for the accomplishment of your fellow labourer is not necessarily antithetical to a feeling of sublime awe for a God that transcends the very material conditions of that life. It is significant, however, that early Canadian anthologists foreclosed on literary expression that reflected popular experience, dialect, and taste. Instead

of a poet who turned to a native tradition and wrote about a range of topics from national heroes to tavern roarers, Dewart proffered a distilled version of McLachlan. From a poet who wrote in both simple and 'literary' styles about love, work, friendship, class solidarity, and patriotism, Dewart drew on selections that exemplified only a stilted emulation of academic tradition and a propensity for abstraction and hagiography.[23]

This truncated view of McLachlan reflected an ideology of canon that both recognized and feared a historic movement toward the democratization of political and cultural power. Although institutional changes such as the English reform bills did not have an immediate impact on Canadian life, the growth of individualism that they signalled was felt in nineteenth-century Canada. McLachlan's poetry reflected an emerging belief in this more diffuse notion of sovereignty among the labouring class that felt a connection between self-reliance and political entitlement. In his writings and their popular reception one can also observe the ascendant claims of lower cultural forms that have typically followed economic and political modernization.

Dewart's anthology, by contrast, embodied the conservative response to these changes by early Canadian literary nationalism. Early in his "Introductory Essay" in Selections from Canadian Poets, Dewart reveals that conservatives did not have to look abroad to arouse their fears of the political mob. Dewart envisioned his collection as an instrument of nation

building that sought to create a national consensus in the face of regional and ethnic loyalties. Its proposal for an official Canadian canon that would help in the "formation of a national character" (Selections ix) forwarded a theory of how literary taste could be translated into a cohesive political culture. Dewart wrote that

> 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. (x)[24]

Yet despite this determined attempt to formulate a national reading public and citizenry from above, Dewart's conception of a national canon was not exempt from post-Enlightenment philosophies of the state. In Selections, Dewart showed that he had been influenced by the very forces against which he was reacting.

For Dewart, McLachlan's popularity served to make the national canon seem like it had emerged from the "the common people" (Dewart, "Introductory" 13) and that it could enjoy a similar breadth of appeal. Like Lighthall, who gave him "first place" as a poet who appealed to "the folk" as opposed to the "inner circle" (xvii), Dewart saw McLachlan as a representative of a Canadian pioneer spirit that founded both the country and the national literature. In a footnote to one of McLachlan's poems that appeared in Selections, Dewart paid tribute to his populist and folksy style:

> In the introduction to this work [Selections], we have expressed our high estimate of Mr. McLachlan's genius. It is no empty laudation to call him the "Burns of Canada." In racy humour, in natural pathos, in graphic portraiture of character, he will compare favorably with the great peasant bard. (141-42)

Dewart's praise of McLachlan's poetic craftsmanship is, however, disingenuous. While claiming this "human-hearted vigorous Scottish Radical" for Canadian literature, Dewart was also trying to disavow the popular and populist elements that accounted for McLachlan's wide repute. Reflecting Matthews's point about McLachlan and the higher echelons of Canadian literary comment, Dewart wrote that McLachlan may resemble the Scottish national poet in style and sentiment but "in moral grandeur and beauty, he frequently strikes higher notes than ever echoed from the harp of Burns" (Selections 142).

McLachlan's function within the narrative of Canadian literary history becomes clearer in an introduction that Dewart wrote for a volume of his collected works issued in 1900. Although he is "pre-eminently the poet of 'the common people'" and is an exemplary "pioneer bard . . . of British Canada" ("Introductory" 12-13, 11), Dewart's aspersions of McLachlan's folksy influences remain:

> Like many others, had McLachlan written less, and given more time and thought to polishing and perfecting the language in which he expressed his

> thoughts, it would have been better for his fame as a poet. He was too often satisfied with putting the passing thoughts that occupied his mind into easy, homely rimes. ("Introductory" 13)

As in Selections, however, Dewart finds a way to knit McLachlan's poetry into an evaluative matrix that presages the reception of the Confederation poets. Dewart discerns "quaint turns of thought" and a "power to . . . unveil the meaning hidden from common sight at the heart of things" (Selections 14) that makes McLachlan a harbinger of a more refined Canadian literature. McLachlan is a poet of "the last generation . . . whose work was done in earlier and ruder times" and, with others, may be considered "the vanguard of our poetic writers" (Dewart, "Introductory" 15). For Dewart, poets such as Campbell, Roberts, and Carman "have worthily carried forward the banners of literary progress which had fallen from the hands of our earlier bards" ("Introductory" 15). The editorial bias that structured the representation of McLachlan's writings in Selections is also reflected in the collected works. In an introduction to a reprint of the volume, E. Margaret Fulton laments the omission of "the more serious pioneer monologues," McLachlan's satires, and the poems that capture a Canadian backwoods dialect (xvii-xxi).

The connections that Dewart imagined between this ideal of a national literature and popular audiences were more rhetorical than real. As is clear in the editorial bias that guided his representation of writers such as McLachlan, Dewart

had embarked on a rigorous recuperative project with the intention of formulating a novel conception of the character and ends of Canadian literature. His theory of representivity paid only lip service to popular taste. In fact, Dewart found that Canadian readers were deluded, their heads clouded by the enjoyment of "low styles" (Selections xi), distracted by a colonial reverence for the writings of other nations, and too ready to dismiss the relevance of good literature to the practical life of the Dominion. Yet if Dewart's official literary canon represented only a marginal segment of Canadian public taste, then how could it be claimed to be truly national?

As Dermot McCarthy has observed, early Canadian anthologists and literary historians legitimated their notion of the national literature through the "internalization of extra-literary concepts" (32). These concepts redefined representivity in relation to a set of abstractions that were seen to be definitive of an idealized notion of Canada. Although Dewart insisted that his collection was not intended to be comprehensive, "I must remind my readers that this is not 'a work on the Poets and Poetry of Canada.' . . . it is simply 'SELECTIONS FROM CANADIAN POETS'" (vii), his preface, introduction, and the organizational rationale of Selections articulated a synthetic theory of Canadian literary history and value. In a sermonizing cultural critique of contemporary tastes and attitudes, Dewart describes a world of perfect essences waiting to be represented in literary form: poetry "sheds a new charm

around common objects; because it unveils their spiritual relations, and higher and deeper typical meanings" (Selections xiii). The truths of such genuine poetic insight are connected to religious and political ideals. Poetry "educates the mind to a quicker perception of the . . . truth disclosed in the works of the creator" as well as consolidating, in literary form, the political and intellectual progress of the state. A national literature

> is not merely the record of a country's mental progress: it is the expression of its intellectual life, the bond of national unity, and the guide of national energy. (Dewart, Selections ix)

In this system, literary value becomes synonymous with a poetry of elevated style that embodies a Canada which has been reified into a select repertoire of symbolic elements: natural geography, the history of national economic and political development, and especially in the case of Dewart and Lighthall, a set of moral ideals that evoke the figure of an imperial Christian hero. Although more explicitly attached to a transcendental universalism than later anthologists, Dewart's conflation of an idealized Canada and a national literature exemplifies the rhetorical contortions that editors would undertake in order to establish the legitimacy of their national collections. McCarthy writes that Dewart brought about

> an ideological cohesion based on the 'complementary' relations of the aesthetic and the practical, a

> complementarity that ultimately becomes a central concept in Canadian literary histories, the concept of univocal spiritual-material progress. (34)

Like Dewart, who describes the mind stimulated by good poetry as "a place and purpose analogous to scenes of beauty or grandeur in the material world" (Selections xii), Lighthall structures his introduction according to the trope of a canoe trip. The experience of his anthology is conflated with an imagined experience of Canada.

> You shall come out with us as a guest of its skies and air, paddling over bright lakes and down savage rivers; singing French *chansons* to the swing of our paddles, till we come into the settlements; and shall be swept along on great rafts of timber by the majestic St Lawrence, to moor at historic cities whose streets and harbours are thronged with the commerce of all Europe and the world. You shall hear there the chants of a new nationality, weaving in with songs of the Empire, of its heroes, of its Queen. (Lighthall xxiv)

The nationalistic function of these theories of literary value become particularly clear in their deprecation of popular genres. One realizes the strategic necessity of denying the claims of popular literature in a canon that is supposed to reflect the state. Where elite poetry served to draw a picture of spiritual, economic, and political health, popular genres emblematized disease and disintegration. In their creation of

a "concept of univocal spiritual-material progress" (McCarthy 34), early anthologists such as Dewart and Lighthall needed to make certain that their theory rejected elements that were evocative of the emotional caprice of the mob and the spectre of sentimental effeminacy. The paradox that underscored this exclusion, however, is that in defining the experience of literature as complementary to the actual experience of Canada, these anthologists were making a case for affective pleasure as a criterion of literary value while abjuring the debasing effects of this quality in popular literature. As in his representation of McLachlan, Dewart appropriated and civilized an aesthetic quality for the national canon while denying its kinship with popular literature.

For Dewart, good poetry enthralls and transports the reader into a realm of sublime experience that affirms the essential correspondence of the individual, the nation, and God. The qualities of this liminal experience are described as analogous to the emotion that results from encounters with nature.

> Of this character is the pleasure received from the beauty and fragrance of a flower-garden; the murmur and sparkle of a pebbly stream; a mountain-lake sleeping among the hills; a tranquil evening, when the sunset-flush of departing day gilds every object with golden lustre; or the soul-soothing strains of melodious music. (Dewart, Selections xii)

Dewart's description of the proper aims and effects of poetry demonstrates his notion of literary decorum by shifting into a conventional poetic diction that is underlined by alliteration and compound adjectives. It also shows how Dewart was subject to the emotional exhilarations of his sublime imaginings, the degree of poetic artifice suggesting the increasing level of his emotive response. Yet this affective power is endowed with a higher purpose. Dewart writes that "It is not without design that God spread these sources of pleasure so thickly around us" (Selections xii).[25]

As in Kant's Critique, Dewart reconciles the imagination's failure to conceive of unity when confronted by the sublime through an appeal to a concept of rationality. Where Kant's rhetorical maneuver guarantees man's "supersensible destiny" (Hertz 50), Dewart ensures that surfeit of feeling is cultivated and channeled in order to support a unitary concept of the self and the nation. Although true poetry testifies to "the power of giving expression to the emotions which throb for utterance at the heart" (Dewart, Selections xi), it ultimately makes the mind turn within in order to perform an identification with a specific notion of Christian reason. Poetry appeals to "the essential unity of the mind" and "ministers to a want in our intellectual nature" (Dewart, Selections xi). For Dewart, good poetry reinforces a model of psychological/moral health where reason encompasses the varied responses and needs of the individual.

> It soothes human sorrow. It ministers to human happiness. It fires the soul with noble and holy purpose. It expands and quickens. It refines the taste. It opens to us the treasures of the universe, and brings us into closer sympathy with all that is beautiful, and grand, and true. (Selections xiii)

This harmonization of heterogeneity in the individual reflects Dewart's determination to establish a similarly unitary model of the canon and the state. Like his concept of mind and body, Dewart's ideal of literary and political culture is founded upon a notion of complementarity and subjection where difference equals deviation.

In his introductory comments, Dewart endeavours to rehabilitate the reputation of poetry by convincing his readers of the complementary nature of verse to the practical and the spiritual life of the nation. As McCarthy observes, Dewart is "attempting a defense of the aesthetic life against an uncomprehending philistine community" (34). Although more concerned with defining positive literary value, he fulfills his polemical aim by alluding to popular writings and sites of evaluation that did not promote the coveted mixture of affect and propriety. The anatomy of a wider cultural critique of popular writings emerges from beneath Dewart's litany of sublime paradoxes.

Dewart locates his Selections from Canadian Poets within this cultural debate by speculating about why poetry is not esteemed in Canada. His anthology is intended as a corrective

to an attitude that has been engendered by a "familiarity with low styles" and "the frequency with which verse has been degraded to be the vehicle of low debasing thought" (Dewart, Selections xi). Dewart asserts that the national poetry that he was proposing was not to be confused with writing that offended conventional patterns of belief. He assails the "mere rhymer of idle and foolish fancies" and "false and degrading views of poetry" which promote "folly, skepticism and licentiousness" (Dewart, Selections xiii). The strong feelings elicited by reputable poetry were worthy of official literary sanction because their affective power reinforced conservative religious and political ideologies. These positive flights of feeling, emotions that Dewart exhibited in the sheer rhetorical excesses of his introduction, were not to be mistaken for mere bodily pleasures. Indeed, in good poetry one experiences an effacement of physical desire as affect is sublimated into a purely intellectual experience:

> To persons of sensibility, they [poetry and other sources of divinely ordained pleasure such as the representations of natural beauty in poetry] yield a deep and speechless joy, vastly purer and more elevating than any form of sordid or sensual gratification. (Dewart, Selections xii)

For Dewart, the genuine poet used his "vision and faculty divine" (Selections xiii) to engender this socially-referential, chaste rapture. His talents were to be used responsibly "not merely to wreath garlands around the brow of

Beauty, to cover Vice with graceful drapery, or to sing the praise of Bacchus and Venus in Anacreaontic ditties" (Dewart, Selections xiii-xiv).

Dewart's conservative response to popular taste is also suggested by his censure of periodical reviewers and publishers for their endorsement of false models. Of the press, Dewart writes that it was guilty of an "indiscriminate praise" of authors in which "the dross was largely mixed with the pure ore" (Selections xv) He maintained that these false critiques had "tended to mislead the public, and to give the authors false notions of their talents and achievements" (Dewart, Selections xv). Booksellers were reprimanded for promoting British and American titles at the expense of indigenous literary works. These reproaches were aimed primarily at a colonial reverence for foreign literature and Canadian commercial opportunism. However, these indictments also imply a subtle critique of the prevalence of popular forms. Dewart knew the extent to which Canadian newspapers and publishers were willing to take a share in the lucrative market for provocative popular writing. His discretion, in this case, was polite, pragmatic, and conventional. He reinforces the division between high and low forms by addressing only the sites that aspire to shape higher taste while dismissing those that cater to the lower instincts of the Canadian public.

The significance of this neglect is borne out in Dewart's reluctance to engage the issue of prose fiction. Although popular fiction would have been an obvious target given its

character and popular appeal, Dewart mentions prose only to better illustrate the expressive vitality of poetry. Like the reviewers and publishers who engaged popular taste, prose fiction was so outside the realm of appropriate literary discussion that it did not merit extensive mention.

> The difference between prose and poetry consists more in the form than in the essential nature of the thought. Every reader knows that noble and good sentiments may be so tamely expressed, as to produce aversion rather than pleasure. (Dewart, Selections xvi)

Lighthall also felt that prose was an effeminate form unsuited to capture the "manly vigour" required of nationalist writing. He states that

> 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. (Lighthall xxxii)

This analogy between femininity and mass culture, prevalent in critiques of popular culture in the nineteenth century, surfaced in early Canadian national anthologies. Dewart feminizes lower forms by contrasting popular verse, "a tissue of misleading fancies, appealing chiefly to superstitious credulity, a silly and trifling thing," to writing that had not been "loosed from the control and direction of reason" (Selections x).[26]

III

It is no surprise that the introductions to early national anthologies were often elaborate in their explanations of the nature and ends of Canadian literature. Nineteenth-century Canada offered a rich and variegated background of literary practice that made it difficult to assert the uncontested legitimacy of a coherent and homogeneous national literary canon. Endeavoring to consolidate a national reading audience that had been exposed to British tradition, a Canadian folk inheritance, and the fashions of an emerging popular literature, early Canadian anthologists needed to forward an intricately metaphorical and affecting theory of representivity that made a convincing argument for the authority of a streamlined Canadian literature.

Because they were attempting to make familiar a new category of writing as well as the values through which it could be enjoyed, one can discern instances where the anthologists reveal the experimental nature of their proposed canons. Dewart introduces pieces that "have never been published before" and begins his introduction by dividing his audience into two groups, those who endorse his plan for a national literature and "the illiterate and unreflecting" (Selections viii, ix). He is also defensive about his choices, "I have made a selection, according to my best judgment, without partiality, or sectional feeling of any kind" and have "nothing to regret" (Dewart, Selections viii). Lighthall's anthology, published first in England, addresses both a foreign

and an indigenous audience as if they were equally ignorant about the nature of Canada and Canadian literature. Aimed initially at a British readership, Lighthall writes that the verse in Songs from the Great Dominion will "transport you to the Canadian clime itself" (xxiv). Lighthall informs his readers of an exuberant national confidence that is reflected in the verse anthologized in his collection.

> The poets whose songs fill this book are voices cheerful with consciousness of young might, public wealth, and heroism. . . . The tone of them is *courage*;--for to hunt, to fight, to hew out a farm, one must be a man! Canadians are, for the most part, the descendants of armies, officers and men, and every generation of them has stood up to battle (Lighthall xxi).

That Lighthall and his publisher did not see a need to revise the introduction for a Canadian audience and that later Canadian commentators and editors endorsed his anthology without remark demonstrates the profoundly educative intention of these early collections.

John Simpson, editor of The Canadian Forget Me Not for MDCCCXXXVII, conceived of his relationship to his audience very differently. Unlike the Canadian anthologists who authorized the official canon, Simpson knew that he was reflecting rather than trying to shape his audience's literary tastes.

> It is presumed that for a publication like the present no introduction or apology is needed; and the

> only excuse for a preface therefore is, that we may have an opportunity of expressing our grateful thanks to the Ladies and Gentlemen, whose kind contributions have enabled us to redeem the pledge given in our announcement of the first Canadian Annual. (Simpson [6])

Simpson does not need to offer elaborate theories about why his audience should be reading his collection. His selections of verse, fiction, and closet dramas are aimed to correspond with his readers' interests. Unlike Dewart, who was trying to formulate a 'national public', advertising his project "throughout the country" (Selections viii), Simpson addresses familiar bourgeois literary and moral categories and perhaps even a real local Niagara audience through a fashionable middle class literary format, the end-of-year gift annual.[27] This differing conception of audience and acceptable literary taste does not mean that the Canadian Forget Me Not is unrelated to the official tradition of Canadian literary anthologization. Being cross-pollinated by some of the same political and cultural ideologies that influenced Dewart, it shares several important characteristics. Rather, Simpson's anthology represents a more broadly-based political, literary, and moral outlook that embraced a willingness to meet the Canadian public half way in determining the national literature. The Canadian Forget Me Not is a hybrid of early Canadian nationalist sentiment, bourgeois morality, and a middlebrow literary taste typical of mass cultural trends in both England and the United States.

Simpson might have found it ironic that his annual was published ten months before the Upper and Lower Canadian rebellions. Presaging the political motives that permeated national anthologies acknowledged in later Canadian literary histories, Simpson intended his collection as a counterpoint to Canadian political instability. He dedicated his anthology to Sir Francis Bond Head, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, for his "statesmanlike management" of popular political disaffection (Simpson [4]). Although reflecting the obsequious tone of a subordinate, his portrayal of a plebeian political mob is unequivocal. One can almost see the pitchforks marshaled at the gates of the governing and mercantile classes. Like anthologists such as Dewart and Lighthall, Simpson had a fear of the political agency and disaffection of 'the masses'.

> Disaffection and complaint were widely spread and extending; a large portion of the people, filled with fearful anticipations of evil, were panting after undefined changes; when the opportune arrival and energetic proceeding of Your Excellency dashed the cup from the very lips of the Apostles of anarchy, revived the hearts of the loyal, collected the straggling affections of the wavering, and proved to the world that British honour and Canadian loyalty, are alike untarnished and inseparable. (Simpson [4])

Simpson believed that literature could be employed as a means of popular education and social control. Still, it is significant to note what aspects of society Simpson believed he

was protecting. When Simpson defines the benefits of social order in his introduction he presents the dominance of a secular ideal. Forwarded as a means to protect the "nature of our free Constitution" through the "elevat[ion of] the standard of Canadian intelligence," the Canadian Forget Me Not "confirm[s] the peaceable and industrious in their course of order and improvement" (Simpson [4]). In a statement that echoes Adam Smith, Simpson writes that his anthology will help Canadians to

> appreciate the value of good Government, truly estimate . . . [the] blessings of internal tranquillity, and understand the means necessary to secure individual happiness, and the public good. (Simpson [5])

The collection is offered as one of many "judicious measures" upon which the development of Canada's "boundless resources" and "prosperity will mainly depend" (Simpson [4]).

Simpson distinguishes his aesthetic by holding a different view about the relationship of form and content to moral and political behaviour. In the Canadian Forget Me Not low themes and mass cultural forms were not equated with depravity or seditious impulse. In a manner that perhaps reflected his classical liberal predilections, Simpson made aesthetics part of the incentive rather than an aspect of the sermon. Affective genres such as the gothic and sensational and disreputable forms, most notably fiction, treating such topics as drunkenness and bawdry were enlisted for the cause of

Canadian social order. In merging popular literary parable and satire with patriotic intent, Simpson was grafting an early Canadian nationalism onto a tradition of bourgeois moral instruction that was also common to Great Britain and the United States.

The Canadian Forget Me Not appears to have been modeled on its British counterpart, a series of 'Forget Me Not' gift annuals that dated from at least as far back as the early 1820s. Like Simpson's volume, the Forget Me Not: A Christmas, New Year's, and Birthday Present, for MDCCCXXXVII (1837) offered a selection of pieces of both practical and imaginative interest. It included, for instance, a short article on "The Bridal Toilette," a gothic poem entitled "On a Ruin, which had been occupied at different periods as a Nunnery and a Baronial Castle," and a short fictional story about romantic love, "Annie Deer: A Tale of the Middle Classes." Although more lavishly printed and bound than its Canadian cousin and illustrated with black and white etchings, gilt pages, and an embossed cover, the British Forget Me Not was of a similar format, small enough to be slipped into a coat pocket or a small drawer, and exhibited a kinship in typographical and layout design. Simpson likely saw one of these antecedents in London where he had been a linen drapier before he emigrated to Niagara in 1835. Indeed, the relationship between popular British annuals and Canadian literary culture is not limited to Simpson's anthology. A number of Canada's best-known early authors had apprenticed their skills in these popular venues.

Susanna Moodie, for instance, published in the British Forget Me Not as well as other fashionable literary annuals such as The Amulet, Emmanuel, Friendship's Offering, and The Iris (Peterman 29, 32). Carl Ballstadt writes that Moodie's sister, Catharine Parr Traill, "wrote sketches and poems for the elegant annuals that flourished in England from 1823" (23).[28] It is also likely that a number of these publications made their way to Canada and the United States as part of the general pattern of literary commerce that routinely flooded the Canadian market with writings issued from British and American presses.

In his conception of popular literature as a tool of moral and political socialization, Simpson assumed the liberal stance taken by editors of British and American literary annuals in the debate about the nature and legitimacy of popular cultural forms. Frederic Shoberl, editor of the British Forget Me Not, wrote in his introduction that he and his unnamed fellow editors forwarded their 1837 volume

> as a new pledge of our conviction that we have a higher duty to perform than merely to minister to the amusement of the frivolous; and that it shall be, as it has hitherto been, our aim to mingle with lighter matters as much information and as many a sound moral lesson as our opportunities and limits enable us to do. [4]

Shoberl and his associates were sincere in their promise. Their anthology's selections were replete with conventional

representations of piety and depictions of middle class women's roles, characterized most notably by sacrifice and sexual fidelity. Although their actual readership was likely not limited to women, the contents and illustrations of Shoberl's volume suggest that the editors assumed a connection between gender and popular culture that reflected the essentialism, if not the censure, of Canadian anthologists such as Dewart and Lighthall. Like many early popular sentimental novels, the British series of 'Forget Me Nots' often outlined courtship and marriage scenarios in many manifestations from a vision of the ideal to a Hogarthian horror. In the 1837 edition Shoberl appeared to anthologize a literal reflection of his imagined audience. Opposite the title page was pictured a young well-to-do lady reading a book which was subtitled "Contemplation."

Alfred A. Phillips, editor of the American The Forget-Me-Not: A Gift for 1846, also claimed a moralistic intention mingled with the promise of entertainment. He had "endeavored to make . . . [his annual's] contents instructive, as well as amusing" (Phillips xii). Unlike the British volume, however, the assumption of this cultural position was employed largely as a rhetorical screen for the presentation of a remarkably salacious selection of poetry and prose. The American annual was decidedly less genteel. Unlike in the British and Canadian versions, no contributor signed their work with the dignified abbreviation "Esq." and the editor chose to forgo the distinction of neo-classicism by citing the date of his anthology in Arabic numerals. The titles of its selections

advertised their provocative content (e.g. "The Maid of the Mist; or, Love and Jealousy") and its full-colour illustrations were somewhat risqué.

Where Shoberl's volume emphasized conventional mores, Phillips's foregrounded affective diversion that appeared to be intended more to market the anthology than to sugarcoat seemly moralisms. The 'Forget Me Not' genre is defined by its social function. The bestowal of this kind of annual served as a reminder of the social bond linking donor and recipient. Its mixture of diversion and didacticism represented both the pleasures and the moral guidance definitive of the ideal of friendship or the familial bond that it served to recollect. Phillips's introduction strives to convince the reader that these sentiments are best declared through the presentation of a tangible keepsake. His is a sales pitch that argues for a consumerist reification of feeling. Phillips writes that "Upon occasions" where persons are separated from each other

> it has been a pleasing custom for those who are so closely bound together by the chords of love, to present at parting, each to the other, some token of remembrance, some tangible, visible object, which, when the eye shall rest upon it, will call to mind, be it when and where it may, the one by whom it was presented. . . . (x)

Indeed, even the style in which the introduction is written advertises the emotionally excessive character of the writings promised within its gilded covers.

> There is a common feeling of sympathy in the human breast that shrinks from the prospect of sinking into forgetfulness. As the lover about to leave the mistress of his soul, and journey in foreign lands, seeks to give her his parting embrace, and bid her farewell, a thousand fears rise within him--confident as he may be of her affections, yet he feels that years of absence will prey upon her mind--that the honied words of adulation and flattery will be poured into her ears by ardent admirers--that her charms and virtues will be the prize for which many may strive for conquest--as he folds her to his bosom, and for the last time imprints upon her brow the parting seal of his love, he whispers in her ear this tender and pathetic entreaty: "Oh, FORGET ME NOT!" (Phillips vii-viii)

Commerce was also important to Shoberl. He lamented the "vicissitudes" of poor sales stating that "most" examples of the genre had recently "sunk after a longer or shorter career" (Shoberl 3). Philips's transparent self-interest, however, brought the mixture of popular forms and commercialism much nearer to the bread and circuses apprehensions of nineteenth-century cultural pessimism.

Simpson's Canadian Forget Me Not reflected more closely the balance struck by its English prototype with the additional characteristic that its coveted social values were underscored by a nascent Canadian nationalism. In this regard, Simpson's

annual reflected the literary and political predilections of its local Canadian bourgeois audience. If Paul Cornell is correct in his belief that the Canadian Forget Me Not is "a volume of poems, tales, and essays by local authors" (656), then it is fair to describe the anthology as an example of how a segment of the Canadian middle class envisioned their social and political ideals in literature. Simpson appears to have reflected this class and business background. Once arriving in Canada, Simpson began an upward social climb that was characterized by business acumen and a loyalty to the Conservative party (Cornell 656). He invested in railroad and manufacturing interests, ran for local and provincial government, and was eventually appointed as provincial secretary in the Étienne-Paschal Taché-John A. Macdonald government in 1864. When he was petitioned to stand for a political nomination in 1857, the register "held 207 signatures, a veritable directory of the business community and social register of Niagara" (Cornell 656). William Kirby, author of The Chien d'Or (The Golden Dog): A Legend of Quebec (1877), was his election agent (Cornell 656). Simpson's notions about literary taste appear to have grown out of his political and business activities. His knowledge of the popular literary and political preferences of his community was likely fostered soon after he emigrated to Canada. He settled in Niagara as a bookseller and stationer and in September of the year that he issued his inaugural annual he began publishing the Niagara Chronicle (Cornell 656).

Simpson's selections demonstrate a familiarity with the thematic and aesthetic tropes of eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeois sensibility. A closet drama, "Captain Plume's Courtship," and a short fictional piece, "An Adventure," exploit a favourite caricature in bourgeois art, the aristocratic rake. Familiar in William Hogarth's illustrations and in literary representations such as Dickens's depiction of Harthouse in Hard Times, the figure was used in a variety of satirical and moralistic contexts as an embodiment of threat to the values of thrift, industry, and female honour. Captain Plume, besieged by his creditors, tries a 'bold stroke for a wife'" (Simpson 11) and relinquishes the freedoms of an uproarious bachelorhood. His friend Tom laments:

> Impossible to be explained. A Canadian learns to rap out a gentlemanly oath, smoke his cigar, sip his sangaree and run into debt, but spoils the catastrophe by wiving. (Simpson 10)

"An Adventure," set in Niagara, concerns the sexual intrigues of a husband who is more concerned about his snuff and burgundy than the welfare of his wife and children. He receives a mysterious, scented letter in "the most feminine of Lady-Like hands" (Simpson 43) which beckons him toward an amorous *rendez-vous*. His excitement is explained as a manifestation of sexual boredom that has led him "fluttering flower to flower" to ill consequences of "person, purse, [and] character" (Simpson 41). Both narratives concern the dissipated follies of those with aristocratic pretensions and designs on young feminine wealth,

status, and beauty. Both protagonists oscillate between disreputable behaviour and self-critical asides. Characterization and plot are subordinate to didactic purpose. The protagonist in "An Adventure," for instance, is married to the same woman twice, the second time to provide closure to a lesson about marital fidelity.

Like Dewart's introduction and selections, the writings included in Simpson's anthology reflect an anxiety about social disintegration that was embodied in a conception of an unchecked emotional excess. This shared fear, however, did not preclude Simpson from transgressing what Dewart would have thought were the boundaries of literary propriety. Prose fiction, for instance, would not be anthologized in a Canadian national collection until 1922 in Lorne Pierce and Albert Durrant Watson's Our Canadian Literature: Representative Prose and Verse.[29] Except for writings that resembled Sir Walter Scott's novels, prose fiction was hardly considered to be literature at all (Gerson 18). Charles Mair, for instance, began a discourse on Canadian writing thus: "By the term Literature you mean, of course, poetry" (qtd. in Gerson 18; Mair 344). Simpson's anthology is remarkable for its early endorsement of the form. Yet it is also exceptional because it anthologized fiction that would have offended even those liberal enough to accept Scott within the realm of the literary. Although some of his contributors reflected a knowledge of historical romance and a specific knowledge of

Scott's idealistic style, Simpson was not above including selections that were sentimental and evocative of the gothic.

Simpson's choices reflect the themes and style of popular British writers of moral sentiment such as Samuel Richardson and Oliver Goldsmith. In "The Sisters of Glenmore" and "Charles Forster" characters discover the sensations of injured integrity. Tears and blushes or the outward demonstration of melancholy testify to a goodness of heart. On learning that her fiancé was "an INFIDEL," one of the sisters of Glenmore "returned to her own room, there to indulge in uncontrolled sorrow. . . . The day dream of her existence was dispelled--Graham and she must part for ever" (Simpson 125). The pattern of innocent suffering in "Poor Jesse" carries with it a *tendresse* of pleasure while in "Saint Mark's Eve" unrequited love results in physical decay:

> He saw her Coffin, and still he claimed her; heaving a sigh similar to the bursting of the gnarled oak, he exclaimed "It was thus I saw her," and fell across the breast of his betrothed. His heart had broken, and the two Lovers repose side by side in the same grave. (Simpson 18-19)

Mixed with these maudlin portrayals of virtue are gothic elements that demonstrate an interest in exploring the psychology of fear. In "A Canoe Voyage" the gothic is alloyed with a Canadianization of Scott's historical romance by its use of Quebec as "a New World counterpart to the folklore, history, and local colour of Scott's fiction" (Gerson 71).

> On the left the granitic peaks which had been in view all the preceding day, and close under which we were steering, rose above us to the height of twelve or eighteen hundred feet, bare and desolate . . . having their bases washed by the sea green waters of the Atlantic, which the coming tide brought up in long billowy swells. In such a situation a small birch bark Canoe looks very small . . . the novelty and magnificence of the scene were not lost on us" (Simpson 100).

As in Ann Radcliffe's writings, the reader is treated to sublime representations of natural grandeur that echo the aesthetic theories of Edmund Burke and the Romantic poets.

The poetry included in the Canadian Forget Me Not exhibits a range of influences and thematics. Pieces such as "Thou Art, Oh God!" and "The Evening Hour" display the confidence typical of poems anthologized by Dewart and Lighthall. Most, however, reflect a sense of resigned endurance where the elicitation of feeling appears as an end in itself rather than as part of some larger political or aesthetic design. Simpson includes a selection of elegies such as "At Newstead in 1827" where resounding certainties are no longer enough to explain away personal suffering such as that borne by the "mouldering Genius" that lies beneath the sod of his "lone tomb" (61).

> But still compelled to bear a life he loath'd,
> Clogged with Grief which preyed upon a heart
> As sensitive, as even sense itself,

He quaff'd his Agony-filled-cup's last dregs
And found a refuge in the grave. (Simpson 61-62)

As in sentimental fiction, this poetry cultivates feeling for its own sake rather than demonstrating an effort to transcend or explain the misfortunes inherent in the human condition. Although stylistically artificial, they nonetheless treat issues of human misery and joy with a directness that is not undercut by pious or nationalistic platitudes. "To the Picture of a Dead Girl, On First Seeing It," "To My Watch," "Recollection," and "Written in a Cemetery" embrace topics that include the passing of youthful innocence, the inevitability of death, consumption and infant mortality, and the pains of unrequited love. Simpson also introduces his own two poems of loving tribute and courtship, "To Eliza, On Her Portrait" and "To a Friend" as well as including the gothic and sensational musings contained in "Lines Written by a Convict: The Night Previous to Execution" (62).

The heterogeneity of Simpson's collection is striking for an anthology that gestures toward the creation of a canon of Canadian literature. It demonstrates that Simpson was aloof from the evaluative stringencies that governed later national anthologists. For instance, he includes a popular novelty verse form, macaronic poetry. Two closet dramas included in the Canadian Forget Me Not are updated versions of vernacular drama adapted to reflect Canadian middle class fears of social and political corruption. "A Dramatic Sketch" satirizes the scheming of two rogue gamblers temporarily down on their luck.

This moralistic piece, set in a "Saloon of the * Hotel, Toronto" (Simpson 22) records their cynical appraisal of writers, lawyers, doctors, army men, and politicians. The character "Logic" feels that he and his companion, "Filch," are well-suited to a "snug Government office" (Simpson 25).

> What though we are influenced by no patriotic feeling, and though to speak truth, our studies have been confined to cards, and our knowledge of Government, like an unmarried wench's fidelity, is a very trifling matter, yet we have glib tongues for flattery, flexible knees to bend for patronage, and hands accustomed to take toll. (Simpson 25)

The sketch concludes with these two characters leaving with another personification of venality, "Snatchem," to unlawfully capitalize on the fortunes of a local man of business. In this Canadian secular morality play we see "Logic," or the faculty of reason, conspiring with the wrong soul mates in order to undermine civil order and the personal initiative and industry of the middle class.

Although advancing a class specific spectrum of literary values and socio-ethical concerns, Simpson's anthology cannot help but to reflect a spirit of eclecticism. In catering to a local bourgeois audience, indeed anthologizing the writings of his own community, Simpson demonstrated an interest in representing an already-formed literary and political constituency. The result is a miscellany of writings that do not demonstrate a high degree of aesthetic sophistication.

Instead, they exhibit an engagement with the current social and cultural values of a particular economic and social class. A number of poems such as Simpson's own "To My Nephew" are even addressed to a specific person within the community.

In Simpson's Canadian Forget Me Not literary value is defined less by a strict adherence to central traditions of sophisticated literary comment than by a demand for reading pleasure. Although neglecting examples of the Canadian tradition of working class lyric and ballad, the inclusion of idealistic and sentimental poetry, prose fiction and vernacular forms of drama reflected more closely the literary cacophony of nineteenth-century Canadian literary culture. Simpson's anthology even included voices of polite dissent. In an essay entitled "The Youth of Canada," an unnamed author questions the efficacy of Simpson's collection to teach Canadians to "appreciate the value of good Government" (Simpson [5]).

> This FORGET ME NOT, which comes out . . . to grace the hand of the fair as she sits in the bosom of the family circle, reading for their entertainment, these lighter offerings of the mind, can hardly with propriety be made the vehicle of those sterner truths, which experience and wisdom, with frowning aspect, often inculcate upon the thoughtless World. (Simpson 76)

The tolerance reflected in these juxtapositions between contrasting conceptions of literature and literary taste was conventional for this genre of popular literary anthology.

This dialogic aspect is demonstrated in Frederic Shoberl's British Forget Me Not where he responds to a poem engaged in a lament about personal misfortune. Shoberl follows this selection of narcissistic verse with his own rhyming couplets about the power of religious faith, entitled "Remonstrance: Addressed to the Writer of the Preceding Stanzas" (356).

Simpson contrasts his choices of fiction and poetry with additional selections of popular verse and paraphrases of eighteenth-century phenomenology that function in this new context as moralistic maxims. Following a verse love letter that satirizes a false suitor's fawning overtures to a young maiden, Simpson includes a clever quatrain that invokes the mythological narrative of Psyche and Cupid. This short middlebrow pastiche of popular verse and classical theme attempts to consolidate the preceding poem's negative evaluation of suitors who petition too hastily for marriage.

> Kate ask'd me why I watch'd her eye
> With look so fix'd she thought me stupid;
> "Sweet Girl" I cried, "methought I spied"
> "A Psyche looking after Cupid." (Simpson 21)

In the myth, Psyche's great beauty excites the jealousy and hatred of Venus, who orders Cupid to inspire her with love for some contemptible being. Cupid, however, falls in love with her himself. Thus the suitor's sweet promise of "for life I will love, for life worship you" (Simpson 21) is undercut by a suggestion of the cool aftermath of an ill-considered marriage.

On the same page, Simpson includes a reminder of the moralistic premise of his anthology.

> Reflection is the power of considering different ideas and comparing them together. All that we learn from books, conversation, or any other source, may become the subject of reflection. (Simpson 21)

Like the metafictional asides in sentimental novels, Simpson intervenes in order to prompt the reader to contemplate and internalize the significance of competing moral perspectives. These short digressions remind the reader of the anthology's status as a linguistic construct and intimate that he or she is an active participant in determining the significance of a moral code. Although the general moral and social attitudes of the anthology remain clear, there is created an additional space for the reader to respond according to his or her own desires and conscience. This dialogue between distinct texts reflects a play of values that is also typical within the writings that Simpson includes in the Canadian Forget Me Not. Because they often represent behaviour contrary to the espoused ideal, these texts embody an element of debate. As Cathy Davidson observes of the courtship and marriage scenarios depicted in early American sentimental novels, these kinds of didactic texts provided an imaginative stage upon which its readers could "vicariously enact" (123) a spectrum of contrasting values.

The representation of alternative social ideologies, however, remains narrow. There are no references to the

labouring class. The suggestion of social conflict is restricted to a contest between aristocratic and bourgeois values. Notions of femininity are similarly restricted to a contrast between selfless, industrious rectitude and libertinism. Most narrow is the depiction of race. The disreputable and the virtuous concur on the issue of Anglo-Saxon superiority. In "An Adventure," the philandering protagonist is taught his lesson by encountering the antithesis of his wife Mary, "a sprightly representative of English beauty," in an African-Canadian racial grotesque.

> Invitation needs not ceremony thought I, and in another moment my right arm encircled the waist of my fair inamorato, my left hand had removed the thick Chantilly veil which darkened her features, and my lips were glued to the cheeks of a thick-lipped, flat-nosed, jet-skinned daughter of Guinea!
>
> "Fye Massa! don't do dat." (Simpson 46)

Aboriginal people are similarly degraded in "Captain Plume's Courtship" where Plume decides that his debts are cause enough to marry "Miss Chinquacousy" (Simpson 11). Once again, it is race that signifies contemptability. Plume asks, "What colour is she of, Sam?". To which Sam replies, "A kind of whitey-brown Sir!" (Simpson 10). Her race makes the marriage a choice in favour of "rhino versus beauty," a racial stereotype that is elaborated further by the suggestion that her uncle consorts with the "boorish and uncivilized" (Simpson 11).

As a didactic anthology, the Canadian Forget Me Not represented a limited range of alternatives to the bourgeois ideal. Embedded within its satires and moralisms were depictions of characters who made use of their cunning for illegitimate gain. There were also representations of those who were marginal to the Canadian social consciousness, a prosperous aboriginal woman and an African-Canadian maid-servant. Although deprecatory and indulging in stereotype, the description of these disreputable characters and marginal Canadians brought into view in a very limited way the nature of Canadian diversity. On the reader response level, it may be argued that satirical and moralistic depictions of inappropriate suitors and political corruption encourage a reader to recognize in an imaginative and vicarious manner their own social and moral agency. The additional juxtaposition of short verse and prose selections that embodied editorial comment foreground the discursive nature of the anthology and may have served to heighten an awareness in the reader that the values embodied in the text could be both endorsed and abjured. The abuse of the aboriginal and African-Canadian woman at the hands of ignoble characters may have elicited sympathy rather than scorn. Arguments for the progressive nature of a text with such a limited social perspective, however, must be advanced with wariness even given the likelihood that some readers may have read against its dominant social assumptions. Yet, unlike later national anthologies, Simpson's Canadian Forget Me Not provides a

glimpse of middle class attitudes about social propriety and race that is unobscured by the idealizations of literary nationalism. It is perhaps a more engaged and culturally-relevant document of nineteenth-century Canadian social history.

The Canadian Forget Me Not differs from anthologies such as Dewart's and Lighthall's in its representation of popular bourgeois literary taste. It includes prose fiction, a limited variety of popular poetic forms, and closet drama that reflects vernacular tradition. Simpson's anthology demonstrates an attempt to make its selections represent Canada. The importance of natural topography and the creation of an epic national history, however, were not the dominant evaluative or organizational categories that they would become in anthologies that followed Dewart's Selections from Canadian Poets. Some of Simpson's choices reflect a superficial Canadianization of the tropes of historical romance: several pieces of short fiction use French vocabulary to heighten a sense of local colour and one piece, "A Canoe Voyage," invokes Quebec as a sublime landscape. Canadianization is most often limited to the insertion of place names such as Niagara and Toronto. Although the Canadian Forget Me Not seeks to instill social values as a means to promote political stability, this programme is not linked explicitly to a conception of a distinctively Canadian consciousness or self-awareness. Unlike Dewart's conception of "national character" or Lighthall's description of a common Canadian spirit and imperial destiny, Simpson does not connect

the values represented in his anthology to an abstract idealization of Canada. The Canadian Forget Me Not is more explicit in its desire to engineer a society in the image of a particular class. Pragmatic in tone, Simpson's literary nationalism is a frank elevation of the ideals and interests of an ascendant Canadian bourgeoisie. Like Dewart and Lighthall, his political and social programme suggests an ideal Canadian national collectivity. This vision, however, is unmediated by idealistic calls for the existence of a distinctly "Canadian" feeling or sensibility.

IV

> "Canada . . . is still documenting and inventing itself."
>
> —Michael Ondaatje, From Ink Lake (xiii)

In From Ink Lake, Michael Ondaatje endorses a concept of Canadian national identity. He invokes repeatedly a national "we" and speaks about "us" as Canadians. Like Dewart, Ondaatje also views literature as a way of understanding the nature of Canada. Literary art has a meaningful educative function: "We must turn to our literature for the truth about ourselves, for a more honest self-portrait" (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xiv). The "truth," however, is not as straightforward as it sounds. Within this idea of Canada and Canadian-ness there is a recognition of an illimitable, ungraspable variety and an acknowledgment that the knowing of Canada always involves a combination of fascination and bewilderment, appeal and

alienation. Beginning with the first lines of his introduction, Ondaatje seeks to identify his anthology as a subjective representation of Canadian literature and thus as a collection that presents only an incomplete and idiosyncratic suggestion of Canada itself. He writes about the impossibility of trying "to represent the best writing of a whole country in one book" and promises "to give instead an angular portrait of a time and place" (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xiii).

This historicization of From Ink Lake is an explicit challenge to the political histories and editorial conventions of Canadian national anthologies. Unlike earlier anthologists who saw themselves as conduits of intrinsic and incontrovertible literary nationalist principles, Ondaatje composes his anthology with the intention that it thematize the role of its editor, its contributing writers, and its readers in the creation of meaning and value. It is an anthology that exemplifies Linda Hutcheon's concept of "historiographical metafiction," where a text weaves into its fabric a referentiality to its writing, reading and "the various contexts in which both acts take place" (Hutcheon, Canadian 17). In From Ink Lake, this thematization of the discursive nature of textual signification has the additional role of satirizing the conventions that have traditionally governed the representation of Canada in Canadian national literary anthologies.

For Ondaatje, this satire aims both to question and to enrich conceptions of national mimesis by representing the

experiences of a wider spectrum of Canadians. Ondaatje writes that he "tried to present more than the usual Anglo-Saxon portrait of this country that gets depicted in the official histories and collections of fiction" (Ink Lake xv). It is this aim that also provokes Ondaatje to repudiate the class system of literary expression whereby forms, genres, and thematics become the equivalent of social groupings and their political and cultural discourses. From Ink Lake is the product of "more relaxed rules of entry" (Ondaatje xvi) that admit not only realist short story but also journal, memoir, and political speech. With these intentions guiding his conception of representivity, Ondaatje reinterprets organizational and aesthetic categories typical of national literary collections.

Ondaatje makes explicit that editing is analogous to authorship and that From Ink Lake is less an "authoritative" literary history than an autobiography of its editor's creative and political interests. Rather than attempting to make his collection appear like a self-evident reflection of an essentialized concept of Canada, Ondaatje is candid about his role as author and the status of From Ink Lake as a reflection of this creative agency. This reference to authorship is expressed through a pattern of allusion evinced in the introduction and in the arrangement of the anthology's contents. Ondaatje cites a passage from a story by Gabrielle Roy, "Voices in Pools," that suggests the relationship of

"writing and reading" (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xvii) and the connection between Ondaatje and the reader of From Ink Lake.

> All round me were the books of my childhood which I had read and re-read, in a dancing beam of dusty light . . . And the happiness the books had given me I wished to repay. I had been the child who reads hidden from everyone, and now I wanted myself to be this beloved book, these living pages held in the hands of some nameless being, woman, child, companion, whom I would keep for myself a few hours. (qtd. in Ondaatje, Ink Lake xvii-xviii)

The quote describes the anthology as a gift not only of literature but of an author as well. That the passage refers to Ondaatje as much as it does to Roy is emphasized by its almost allegorical description of the reader of From Ink Lake, the "nameless being" absorbed or "kept" within the intimate perusal of the passage itself. We hold "these living pages" (qtd. in Ondaatje, Ink Lake xviii).

Ondaatje also foregrounds his role as a writer by framing his introduction with an epigram and a concluding line that suggest the idea of one-handedness, a unique trope evocative of his own writings. His quotation of W. S. Merwin about a "one-armed explorer [who] / Could only touch half of the country" and the suggestion that, as an anthologist, he had "only one hand" with which to "hold on to just some of the things that . . . [he] loved" (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xiii, xviii), recalls Ondaatje's conflations of his own literary persona with left

handed writer figures in The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems, verse selections such as "King Kong Meets Wallace Stevens," and the one-footed knife-thrower who illustrates the cover of his selected poems, There's a Trick With a Knife I'm Learning To Do. He accomplishes the allusion through what can be called conceptual rhyme.[30] His one-handed role as editor is analogous to his inability to provide closure to the myth of Billy, to free himself from antecedent literary influence, or to have undergone a literary apprenticeship without the risk of committing serious error and omission.

The organizational rationale of From Ink Lake reflects the conventions of storytelling. The themes and titles of its short stories evoke a beginning and a conclusion. Selections are arranged like sonnet cycles where individual pieces are grouped to explore different aspects and moods of a common theme. As in the sonnet cycle, they suggest both their thematic relationship and their status as autonomous literary works. This arrangement is a metafictional satire of national literary anthologies. National collections typically classify their inclusions thematically, chronologically, or according to an alphabetical arrangement by author with an aspect of self-assurance that demonstrates a belief in the authority of Canadian narratives of literary and national progress. From Ink Lake deconstructs this air of certainty by parodying the national anthology's aura of authenticity and its representation of themes such as early settlement and national topography. It even questions the ability of literature to

convey the significance of individual and group experience and so speculates about the efficacy of a national literature to represent Canada to Canadians.

From Ink Lake begins with stories that evoke the early history of Canada. They present a provocative narrative of English and French colonization, satirize the conventional representation of aboriginal peoples, and question the cultural and psychological importance of geo-political boundaries such as the 49th parallel. The opening story, Alistair MacLeod's "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun," suggests the inaugural moments of a new day and a new era of European history in North America. Yet as the title's allusion to the folk belief that "predawn avian song serves as a kind of aubade to summon up the sun" (A. Davidson, "As Birds Bring Forth the Story" 33), the optimism of this new beginning is haunted by old world history. MacLeod's story concerns a Gaelic family curse, visited upon successive generations, that threatens the narrator in present day Toronto. As is demonstrated in Dewart's and Simpson's anthologies, Canada was imagined as a vast northern landscape, a historical tabula rasa. The theme and formal pattern of MacLeod's story, its "strategies of displacement, substitution, and elision" (A. Davidson 33), however, illustrate the irrepressible recurrence of history without regard to new place or circumstance. The narrator and his brothers may wish to deny the presence of the gray haired mythical dog, the *cù mòr glas*, that portends death, but they know "such actions to be of no avail" since

> with succeeding generations it seemed the spectre had somehow come to stay and that it had become *ours* . . . in the manner of something close to a genetic possibility. (MacLeod, "Birds" 6)

Despite its refutation of the colonial fantasy about an escape from historical accountability, the story does not attempt to substitute its own hegemony of fact. Ondaatje chooses a narrative that suggests its own investment in myth-making. The *cù mòr glas* is described as a "real or imagined dog" perhaps manifesting less a fact "literally known" than a "fear or belief" (MacLeod, "Birds" 6-7). The narrator reveals his paranoid turn of mind by stating that "You cannot *not* know what you do know" (MacLeod, "Birds" 8). Indeed, our very reading of MacLeod's narrative "further attests to the continuing currency of the belief pieced into story" (A. Davidson 34). Thus through the reading of "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun," we realize our role in the maintenance of the family legend, enact Hutcheon's idea of historiographical metafiction, and so further Ondaatje's deconstructive aim in From Ink Lake.

Gabrielle Roy's "The Well of Dunrea" develops Ondaatje's anti-narrative of colonial settlement. The story illustrates the persistence of cultural difference and the "lies" (Roy 15) that characterized official accounts of westward expansion. For the Eastern European immigrants who saw the village of Dunrea represented in the promotional photographs of the Canadian Pacific Railway, it appeared as an embodiment of New World promise. Its sudden ruin by fire, however, begins a

story that reveals the self-interest that underlay this idyllic depiction of benevolent colonial paternalism and assimilation. For "Papa," a French-Canadian governmental land agent, the prosperity of the town's Russian homesteaders, "his 'little Ruthenians'" (Roy 9), displaced the real story of "a dismal countryside of stiff grass" and so served as a balm to his conscience that "hated all lies . . . even lies by admission" (Roy 15). It is a mixture of counterfeit idealism and self-deception that obscures the fact that "Dunrea helped his career" and made "a great deal of money" for the CPR at the expense of Poles, Romanians, Czechs, and others who ended up not as characters in those honied daguerreotypes but more often as farmers tormented by a harsh climate or as underpaid drudges "in a mine" (Roy 15).

Canada was the consequence of a range of differing interests and expectations that reflected little of the epic design trumpeted in official historical or literary narratives of nation-building. As Ondaatje writes in his introduction to From Ink Lake, Canada "is a country of metamorphosis" (xiii), the product of many motives that did not stem from a common concept of Canada. Indeed, many never even imagined its significance, thinking instead of this northern place as a space between other possible destinations.

> We came as *filles du Roi*, "daughters of the king"--
> those girls of marriageable age, most of them
> Parisian beggars and orphans ill prepared for the
> hardships of life in Canada, who in the seventeenth

> century were shipped off to New France to provide the French army with wives. We came as exiles, or sometimes thinking Canada was just a conduit to the riches of the Orient or, later, a conduit to the United States--just "Upper America". We named fabulous mountain ranges and rivers after ourselves or the wives of English Kings, labeled the landscape without any sense of irony. (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xiii-xiv)

Ondaatje's choice of "The Well of Dunrea" reflects his conception of Canadian history where the elaborate choreography of national epic is undercut by the concurrence of contradictory motives. Despite their outward conformity, the Ruthenians were not in fact "the sort of settler Papa liked: people facing forward" and having "above all" a faith in "a wonderful and well-founded future" in Canada (Roy 10). Papa's impression that "they understood each other" (Roy 13) and that their differences of culture and language were merely ornamental is shown to be an illusion borne of a reciprocity between the needs of his own self-serving paternalism and the desires of the settlers to garner advice and aid from the Canadian government. In a time of crises the settlers rely on old world "superstitions." The story concludes with a colonist, hitherto seen as exemplary in his "never-failing judgment" (Roy 19), walking toward a burning cottage with an icon of the Virgin as his only shield, his fellow colonists

looking on "like spectators in a living hedgerow . . . very curious about God" (Roy 19).

Read as part of the secondary narrative about Canada, "The Well of Dunrea" recounts the destruction of a man's colonial idealism and a national myth of progress. Roy's story also serves to acknowledge the role of the French in Canadian settlement and sets into motion a kind of westward narrative momentum sustained by Wallace Stegner's "The Medicine Line," a tale of the prairies that concerns the definition of the Canadian west, and by George Bowering's "Bring Forth a Wonder" an excerpt from his novel, Burning Water, about the exploration and naming of the British Columbia coast by George Vancouver.

Wallace Stegner's "The Medicine Line" explores the imaginative and practical significance of legislated boundaries, those of literature and those of politics. Early national literary anthologists and historians used the Canadian landscape to focus their articulation of a national mythology. As Dermot McCarthy observes, this "topocentric" orientation was aimed as a substitute for the lack of a common Canadian cultural symbol or political event with which to focus and legitimate claims for national difference and distinctiveness: "Geography must serve in the place of history; space must overdetermine time" (McCarthy 32). In the 49th parallel Stegner finds a metaphor for these official ideologies of nationalism. The excerpted chapter from his Wolf Willow chronicles how the significance of these lines of demarcation change as they radiate toward the periphery and how decisions

of the far away centre are translated as they reach into unforeseen circumstances and lives. Against the horizon of the Saskatchewan prairie these Canadian nationalist narratives evoke a mixed sense of patriotism and incredulity.

> . . . we were almost totally Canadian. The textbooks we used in school were published in Toronto and made by Canadians or Englishmen; the geography we studied was focused on the Empire and the Dominion, though like our history it never came far enough west, and was about as useless to us as the occasional Canadian poem that was inserted patriotically into our curriculum. Somehow those poems seemed to warn of disaster and fear of the dark and cold in snowy eastern woods. (Stegner 24)

Rather than strengthening an affiliation with Canada as a whole, these legislated symbols of the centre help to spawn regional identities that arise from a recognition of the ironies implicit in a single concept of Canada and Canadian-ness.

In "The Medicine Line" symbols invested with pan-Canadian significance are paraphrased into their local, idiosyncratic histories. For the first-person narrator, the southern border of Canada belies a feeling of hybrid identity that transgresses a nationalist taboo about Canadian distinctiveness.

> We could not be remarkably impressed with the physical differences between Canada and the United States, for our lives slopped over the international

> boundary every summer day. Our plowshares bit into Montana sod every time we made the turn at the south end of the field. (Stegner 25)

For the Sisseton and Yankton Sioux and other aboriginal tribes, however, it had the practical effect of defining a place of sanctuary from American colonists and cavalry. For some this "very open and penetrable fence" (Stegner 39) had an imaginative and subtle cultural significance; for others, it was a very practical matter of survival. It could be both nearly "indistinguishable and ignored" (Stegner 26) and a symbol so potent so as to prompt its appropriation and redesignation as a "line of medicine" intended "for the protection of the Great Mother's red children against their enemies" (Stegner 41).

In these histories of the margin, Stegner initiates a captivating deconstruction of the heavy-handed essentialisms of nationalist discourse. His account is not devoid of a feeling of Canadian-ness or even of a nostalgia for the clichéd symbols of Canada and the remnants of its British heritage. Yet like From Ink Lake as a whole, the story maps the complexity of Canadian identity, its variegated and contextual significance for different individuals and groups situated in different times and regions. George Bowering's "Bring Forth a Wonder" and Anne Hébert's "The First Garden" wind down Ondaatje's introductory sequence about Canada's early history of settlement. Bowering's tale satirizes the portrayal of Canada's First Peoples by depicting George Vancouver's

exploration of the West Coast from the perspective of two aboriginal warriors. They are portrayed neither as sentimentalized victims nor as epic marauders. Colonial history is satirized by having them "speak like eighteenth-century Englishmen" (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xvi) and demonstrating an acute knowledge of European explorers. Its postmodern technique of thematizing Bowering's role in the revision of national myth implicates the reader as a participant in the formulation of historical narrative. "The First Garden" suggests the constructed nature of history in its female protagonist's intention to play the role of "Marie Rollet," a *fille du Roi*. The actress's conviction "that time recaptured is theatre" (Hébert 55) is contrasted to a desert of facts about the subject of her artistic recreation:

> Of little Renée Chauvreux, there are very few signs: a mere three lines in the city register and the inventory of her meager trousseau. . . . how to awaken the little dead girl lying stiff under the ice and time, how make her speak and walk afresh? (Hébert 61)

The stories in From Ink Lake are chosen and arranged in order to provide a representation of Canada that avoids the appearance of being a finished and complete statement about Canadian identity. Like the introductory sequence of five stories, the remaining selections work individually and in tandem to engender surprise and interest at the difference that can be subsumed by the term "Canadian." For Ondaatje, a

reading of his anthology is intended to be analogous to the experience of culture shock, this "tense rubbing together of two distinct worlds" that is "perpetual" (Ink Lake xv) in our history and our literature. In his introduction, this experience is articulated through a quotation of a story by Dionne Brand:

> Shanti Narine spat food into her napkin . . . It was what white people ate and she wanted to get the taste for it, but it made her ill. It was the kind they put on aeroplanes to confound immigrants and third world people . . . They never let up, did they? If you thought you had their lingo down, they gave you spinach quiche to remind you that you didn't know anything. Then they threw in something with whipped cream on it so you couldn't tell whether to eat it or shave your armpits with it. (qtd. in Ondaatje, Ink Lake xvii)

As in Brand's story, the reader of the anthology is reminded that Canada always contains an element of the foreign. It is a continually cascading variety of perspectives that is simulated in From Ink Lake through the juxtaposition of the divergent narrative and genre perspectives of Ondaatje's selections. From Ink Lake is a multicultural anthology that interpolates representations of different class, racial, ethnic, and gender experiences with the intention of making these depictions points of imaginative departure for a further questioning and exploration of Canadian diversity. Ondaatje writes that "The

book is a collage" and that through this incongruous pasting together of selections he "wanted to present an historical mix, a diverse assembly of forms and techniques and voices" (Ink Lake xvi). His selections and his arrangement of From Ink Lake enact the shock of cultural difference. If there is an underlying premise to Ondaatje's selections, it is based on a recognition that "We are all still arriving" (Ink Lake xvii).

Like the juxtaposition of nationalist poetry and Stegner's prairie landscape in "The Medicine Line," each of Ondaatje's selections provides an ironic backdrop for the reading of another story and so displaces all views from a position of central authority. Not all of Ondaatje's selections employ a postmodernist technique that calls to mind the contexts of their reading and writing. Within the narrative of From Ink Lake, however, even realistic selections belie their status as text and underline the significance of Ondaatje's editorial agency and our role as readers. Each story is juxtaposed to its counterparts in Ondaatje's collection and to a range of familiar national cultural discourses that have been embodied as evaluative rhetorics in national literary anthologies. Ondaatje's parody of Canadian settlement narratives, for instance, is followed by a series of loosely-assembled story sequences that continue to relate a more complex portrait of Canada. Alice French's "Spring and Summer," Jacques Ferron's "Chronicle of Anse Saint-Roch," and Joe Rosenblatt's "The Lake" offer different perspectives on the imaginative and practical significance of Canada's seasons and topography. French draws

fine distinctions between Arctic spring and summer by relating the migratory pattern of Inuit family life, a complex set of cultural practices typically hidden from southern Canadian view:

> By September most of us were back in school. . . . our school uniforms were issued, and our personal clothing and identities were put away for another term. We became just like the Anglican School kids once more. (114)

Ferron's story illustrates how a small locale in the Gaspesie that appears to be wholly defined by its French-Canadian heritage, custom, and name could be touched by lives British, English-Canadian, and African. For Rosenblatt, the "cold deep ink" (128) of a lake serves as a metaphor for the chaotic torrents of his thought, its confused riot of recollection, correlation, and combination:

> The lake is breathing, filaments of thought move through its entire system, and then that brain explodes. The water heaves, picking up momentum, inhaling, exhaling . . . (127)

Seen in the context of Canadian national anthological discourse where the land becomes a synonym for Canada, Ondaatje's quotation of Rosenblatt proposes a new and ironic metaphor for the nation. Indeed, all three stories infuse the landscape with a significance that disturbs its romanticized incarnation in Canadian national myth.

From Ink Lake is also arranged to suggest a rough chronological progression that acknowledges the many successive waves of immigration that have shaped Canada. It is an enumeration that is intended to evoke the incommensurable complexity of historical and personal narratives that extend far into the Canadian past yet retain a contemporary relevance and vitality that is reemphasized with each new arrival. Although interspersed and overlapping with examinations of other general themes, the selections in From Ink Lake evoke a historical sequence that is intimated by Ondaatje in his introduction. Beginning with stories about early Canadian settlement, the collection proceeds through selections such as "The Boy's Own Annual, 1911," "My Grandfather's House," and the "Halifax Explosion, 1917," which concern the opening decades of the twentieth century. These are followed by a survey of the theme of family from the point of view of class ("Blood Ties"), age ("The Accident"), and culture ("Some Grist for Mervyn's Mill") that is situated in time by the fact that it precedes stories that evoke the post-WW II influx of a new array of immigrants from places other than western Europe. This latter periodization, suggested by stories such as Margaret Atwood's "Man From Mars," Austin Clarke's "Leaving This Island Place," and Dionne Brand's "Photograph," is reflected in Ondaatje's conception of Canadian literary and social history. He writes in his introduction that "In the second half of this century new immigrant writers have painted a different image of Canada that is . . . outside the Anglo-Saxon tradition" (Ondaatje, Ink

Lake xv). Within the latter half of the anthology are also stories that concern the theme of language and identity ("Roget's Thesaurus," "The Search for Petula Clark," and "The Naming of Albert Johnson") as well as an array of stories that document the legacies of tolerance and racism that mark Canadian history. Ondaatje includes selections such as Elisabeth Harvour's "Foreigners," an excerpt from Joy Kogawa's Obasan, and Chief John Kelly's speech to the political and financial establishment about native land rights.

From Ink Lake ends with Alistair MacLeod's "The Closing Down of Summer," a story that reinvokes the opening image of the anthology. The narrative that began with a premonition of dawn adjourns with a waning of summer light; Ondaatje's stories about Canada move toward conclusion like MacLeod's protagonists, who "drive swiftly westward into the declining day" (MacLeod, "Closing" 701). As in the introductory story, however, where new beginnings are interfused with past history, the denouement implied by "The Closing Down of Summer" holds within it a suggestion of continuity, an intimation of stories yet to come. Ondaatje simultaneously invokes and subverts the narrative pattern of realistic storytelling convention. In this reference to conventional narrative, he also satirizes the notion of comprehensive representation in national literary collections such as his own, a satirical stance that is reflected in his introduction where he is facetious about having represented "only just half the country, possibly no more than a third" (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xvii).

Like From Ink Lake, "The Closing Down of Summer" illustrates the difficulty of imagining the totality of Canadian experience. Yet it also suggests a belief in the possibility of bridging solitudes, a conviction that is implicit in the deconstructive aim of the anthology. In MacLeod's story the narrator laments the passing of his Celtic culture and his inability to relate a visceral knowledge of his life in the mines. In creating a better life for his children, he has guaranteed that the intergenerational understanding that has existed between the members of his mining family will be replaced by "only an increased sense of anguished isolation and an ironic feeling of confused bereavement" (MacLeod, "Closing" 695). He knows that to inexperienced ears his life stories and the Gaelic folk songs that he shares with his fellow workers "lose almost all of their substance in translation" (MacLeod, "Closing" 693). Yet in his contemplation of the incommensurability of his experience, an experience that "like our Gaelic, seems to be of the past and now largely over" (MacLeod, "Closing" 695), he comes upon a subtle, inadvertent epiphany that serves as a coda for the anthology as a whole. Despite his isolation, MacLeod's narrator seeks for evidence of meaningful connection across generational and class lines. He searches for these traces in literature and, specifically, in the claims of a literary anthology.

> . . . in the introduction to the literature text that my eldest daughter brings home from the university it states that "the private experience, if articulated

> with skill, may communicate an appeal that is universal beyond the limitations of time or landscape." I have read that over several times and thought about its meaning in relation to myself. (MacLeod, "Closing" 694)

He is reluctant to give it credence until the last moments of the story when he remembers the lines of a medieval ballad that embodies a sentiment that he has voiced earlier in the story. "Stumbling upon" the piece in his daughter's anthology, it lends clarity to feelings that he has hitherto been unable to express. He has told us that he feels like "a figure in some medieval ballad who has completed his formal farewells and goes now to meet his fatalistic future" (MacLeod, "Closing" 701). We realize with him that it articulates the emotion that has prompted the personal elegy that we read in "The Closing Down of Summer."

The ballad resurfaces as he listens to Gaelic song and leads to a recognition that literature can transport feelings of a personal nature. Like his folk songs, the ballad captures a significance that is conveyed across centuries and generations.

> It comes to me now in this speeding car as the Gaelic choruses rise around me. I do not particularly welcome it or want it and indeed I had almost forgotten it. Yet it enters now regardless of my wants or wishes, much as one might see out of the corner of the eye an old acquaintance one has no wish

> to see at all. It comes again, unbidden and unexpected and imperfectly remembered. It seems borne up by the mounting, surging Gaelic voices like the flecked white foam on the surge of the towering, breaking wave. Different yet similar, and similar yet different, and in its time unable to deny. (MacLeod, "Closing" 702)

The similarities between his imagined fate in the mines of South Africa and the anonymous knight's realization that "Death is to man the final way - / I wende to be clad in clay" (MacLeod, "Closing" 702) are as undeniable as they are distinct. Like Ondaatje who writes that "We must turn to our literature for the truth about ourselves" (Ink Lake xiv), the narrator's reference to folk song and to the swell of the ocean's waves suggests a belief in the timeless communicative potential of literary culture. Both MacLeod's narrator and Ondaatje acknowledge, however, that literary significance is the result of a process of interpretation that discerns meaningful patterns in the midst of a confusion of contradictory signals that in their context would have meant other things to other people. The meaning of the medieval ballad is "Different yet similar, and similar yet different, and in its time unable to deny" (MacLeod, "Closing" 702). In From Ink Lake, we are also reminded of the contingency of narrative significance. The "story" of the anthology is revealed as Ondaatje's "angular portrait of a time and place" (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xiii). The juxtaposition of its selections and their satire on nationalist discourse thematize the agents

and circumstances that determine meaning. Representativity is always defined in relation to subjectivity:

> Alistair MacLeod's Maritimes or Alice Munro's Ontario or Sandra Birdsell's Manitoba, Mordecai Richler's Montreal, Glenn Gould's Northern Ontario--these make up the true portrait of the country, which was what I wanted to catch in this collection. (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xiv)

Ondaatje prefers to define history not as chronology but as a manifestation of culture and belief. Rather than representing Canadian prose fiction from all periods of Canada's history,[31] he chooses contemporary stories such as "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun" that "reach . . . far back into the past, into fable" (Ondaatje, Ink Lake xiv). Ondaatje is interested in "the mythology of a place" called Canada and in the ways in which people are both defined by and definitive of history: "The past invades us" (Ink Lake xiv).

"The Closing Down of Summer" concludes an anthology that suggests multiplicity on both a thematic and reader response level. It is not surprising then that in constructing this novel portrait of Canada and Canadian prose that Ondaatje would include authors and writings that had never been previously anthologized in a Canadian national collection of short fiction. Ondaatje writes that he "chose stories rather than authors" (Ink Lake xv). He is concerned with portraying a diverse narrative of Canada rather than in being faithful to past evaluative practice. Ondaatje includes a number of standards such as the

concluding chapter of Leacock's Sunshine Sketches as well as Hugh MacLennan's famous description of the Halifax explosion in Barometer Rising. He also anthologizes stories by authors such as Alice Munro and Sinclair Ross who have been well-represented in this national literary forum.[32] Yet these well-known pieces and authors are situated within a context that exhibits a significant departure for Canadian collections of prose fiction. From Ink Lake includes thirty-nine English-Canadian authors. Over one-third (15 authors, 38 per cent of the anthology) had appeared either only once or never before in earlier collections. Alice French, Glenn Gould, John Kelly, Daniel David Moses, Bharati Mukherjee, Carol Shields, and Elizabeth Smart made their Canadian prose fiction anthology debut in From Ink Lake. Dionne Brand, Joy Kogawa, Rohinton Mistry, Charles Ritchie, David Adams Richards, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and Sean Virgo made their first encore in Ondaatje's collection. Considered from the point of view of new story selections, From Ink Lake's fresh editorial perspective comes into even clearer focus. Nearly all of Ondaatje's choices are unknown to Canadian national prose anthologies. Even highly-anthologized authors such as Munro, Ross, and Wilson and well-known writers such as Atwood are represented by selections unique to Ondaatje's anthological narrative. From Ink Lake's relationship to the canon of Canadian short fiction reflects its thematic and formal outlook.[33] It satirizes past nationalist discourses as well as presenting new perspectives and new selections in order to better encompass the diverse cavalcade of voices of Canada and

Canadian writing. It embodies in theme, form, and content Ondaatje's assertion that "Canada . . . is still documenting and inventing itself" (Ink Lake, xiii).

Notes

[1] The first Polish translation of The English Patient was published by Swiat Ksiazki in 1997. The Miramax film poster was its dust jacket. (Ondaatje, Michael. Angielski Pacjent. 1992. trans. Waclaw Sadkowski. Warsaw: Swiat Ksiazki, 1997.)

[2] Ondaatje saw Diefenbaker's public intervention as "the nicest thing he could have done for me . . . gave a press conference and suddenly my name was plastered on the front pages" (Gefen D3).

[3] Another earlier example would be Leonard Cohen who assumed a public persona that satirized the media's uncritical adulation. He also modified his aesthetic in response to his public construction as the "golden boy of poetry" by shifting into a shocking political rhetoric in Flowers for Hitler. The emergence of Douglas Coupland through the media's romance with his term "Generation X," and his subsequent writings and marketings of his literary career, demonstrate that a new mode of influence has manifested itself in the reception and writing of Canadian literature as a result of what Canadian writer Susan Swan has called the "new electronic bazaar" of literary value.

[4] The novel sold roughly 3000 copies per month in Canada before the release of the film. Between the time of the film's release in November 1996 and March 1997, Ondaatje's The English Patient sold roughly 30,000 copies per month. By March of 1997, The English Patient had sold 300,000 copies in paperback in Canada. These figures are based on Knopf Canada sales

statistics (Renzetti C1).

[5] Compare the opening chapter of Running in the Family with Marchand's article. Ondaatje writes

> in the midst of a farewell party in my growing wildness--dancing, balancing a wine glass on my forehead and falling to the floor twisting round and getting up without letting the glass tip, a trick which seemed only possible when drunk and relaxed--I knew I was already Running" (Ondaatje, Running 22).

Marchand opens his article thus:

> It would be wrong to start a profile of Michael Ondaatje by describing his amazing ability, after he's had a few drinks, to spin around a floor, practically flat on his back, balancing a glass of wine on his forehead. . . . Let us begin, therefore, by setting aside the wine glass trick for a moment . . .". (G1)

[6] Margaret Atwood is a good example of both academic and popular modes of exchange. Canadian literary critics and popular feature and review writers used their opportunity to speak about Margaret Atwood and her early writings as a means of reinforcing a variety of idealized understandings of Canada and the "new liberated woman." Rhetoric used in academic evaluations of Atwood's work throughout the 1970s was consistent with the ideological evolution of Canadian nationalism and feminism. The pervasiveness of Canadian political influences on Atwood criticism is demonstrated by a survey of her early

reception in the United States. Her poetry, aligned with Sylvia Plath's, and her first novels reviewed as works of "feminist black humor," Atwood entered the American literary scene as a "woman's writer." In Canada, Atwood's feminist canonization had to wait until the latter half of the 1970s when Canadian scholars were able to consolidate a feminist reinterpretation of works that had been maintained initially as patent expressions of Canadian nationalist sentiment. Pictorial/graphic and editorial choices in mass-market magazines led to a diverse gallery of reputational images of Atwood that challenged those constructed by the Canadian literary academy. Readers of the Canadian women's magazine Chatelaine, for instance, were introduced to Margaret Atwood as a writer of saucy romances, not nationally-oriented realistic fiction. Provocative excerpts from Lady Oracle (1976), Life Before Man (1979), and Bluebeard's Egg (1983) were chosen and introduced with comments and layout design that emulated the generic tropes of pulp fiction.

[7] The following is a selected list of Canadian critical statements concerning the literary historical significance of Dewart's anthology. Withrow, W. H. "Prominent Canadians: Edward Hartley Dewart." Week 8.50 (1891): 798+.; "Twenty years before the appearance of Seranus's miniature anthology Rev. Edward Hartley Dewart published, under the plain title of Selections From Canadian Poetry [sic] what may be called the first treasury of Canadian verse (1864)." Logan, J. D., and Donald French, eds. Highways of Canadian Literature: A Synoptic

Introduction to the Literary History of Canada (English) from 1760 to 1924. Toronto: McClelland, 1924. 381.; "The state of polite letters in the Province of Canada three years before Confederation is well described in Canada's first comprehensive anthology of poetry." Eggleston, Wilfrid. The Frontier and Canadian Letters. Toronto: Ryerson, 1957. 4, 89; Rhodenizer, Vernon Blair. Canadian Literature in English. Montreal: Quality, 1965. 959.; "[Dewart's] Selections, the first and last general anthology compiled before confederation, represented Canadian poets alone, without any admixture of borrowed song." Klink, Carl F., et al. eds. Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English. Vol. 1. 2nd ed. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976. 161.; Klink, Carl F., et al. eds. Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English. Vol. 2. 2nd ed. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976. 72.; ". . . limited though Canadian pre-Confederation poetry may have been, it was neither so bad or banal as Edward Hartley Dewart's Selections from Canadian Poets represented it in our pioneer anthology in 1864." Klink, Carl F., et al. eds. Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English. Vol. 3. 2nd ed. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976. 18, 295.; Staines, David, ed. The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1977. 3.; Woodcock, George. Northern Spring: The Flowering of Canadian Literature. Vancouver: Douglas and MacIntyre, 1987. 10, 181.; Stouck, David. Major Canadian Authors: A Critical Introduction to Canadian Literature in

English. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1984. 300.; New, W. H. A History of Canadian Literature. New York: New Amsterdam, 1989. 80. One of the more significant documents is the University of Toronto Press's reprint of Dewart's Selections from Canadian Poets (Literature of Canada, Poetry and Prose in Reprint. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1973.).

[8] I draw my idea of a cultural rhetoric from my reading of Paul de Man's deconstruction of New Criticism in his essay "Form and Intent in the American New Criticism" (1971). In this essay de Man attempts to account for the prevalence of a particular way of talking about art through an examination of its basis in history and its perpetuation as tradition. For de Man, New Critical organicism, or the notion that a poem is "naturally" formally unified, complete and totally self-referential, is part of a pattern of thought about literature and language which has been adopted by contemporary criticism as simply the latest link in a long line of ideological appropriation. de Man discerns a culture of literary criticism which refuses to know itself and identifies the basis of this deception in a metaphorical notion of literature contained in the Western intellectual tradition. He sees it as "supported by the large metaphor of the analogy between language and a living organism, a metaphor that shapes a great deal of nineteenth-century poetry and thought" (de Man 27) but is evinced in canonical writings from I.A. Richards back through to Coleridge.

[9] Michael Bérubé uses the term in his brilliant

reputational study of Melvin Tolson and Thomas Pynchon, Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers (1992). Authorization

> is not an attribute of authors so much as a result of authors' complex interactions with readers, agents, publishers, reviewers, award committees, and other institutions--which is to say that the study of authorization . . . attends to the ways authors are put into discourse in the widest possible sense. (57)

[10] Michael Bérubé uses the term "neglect" to suggest a moment when there exists "sufficient professional and cultural consensus" (135) within an evaluative community to ignore a writer without shame or embarrassment. It is useful because it suggests an "observable" set of reception conditions for writers who fall out of favour. An interesting aspect of Bérubé's elaboration of the term emerges in his survey of how Melvin Tolson's work was effectively misread so that it could be "safely neglected" (135) from the perspective of high modernist evaluative doctrine.

[11] Dewart did print one poem that was included in McGeorge's The Canadian Christian Offering. He reprints MacGeorge's "The Emigrant's Funeral," a lament for non-Canadian soil included in the "Sacred and Reflective" section (MacGeorge 14; Dewart, Selections 51-52).

[12] "Fidelis" is Agnes Maule Machar's (1837-1927) pseudonym.

[13] Out of a total of 304 pages, "Miscellaneous Pieces" accounts for 123 pages (40.6 %) and encompasses 81 poems. The

"National and Descriptive" section equals 98 pages (32.3%) for 59 poems and the "Sacred and Reflective" equals 55 pages (18%) for 32 poems. The "Preface" and "Introductory Essay" account for the remaining 22 pages.

[14] "Seranus" is Susie Frances Harrison's pseudonym.

[15] See, for instance, Poe's involvement with the Young Americans, an influential group of literary nationalists during the 1830s, elaborated in Meredith L. McGill's "Poe, Literary Nationalism, and Authorial Identity" (The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe. Ed. Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1995. 271-304.).

[16] Hardy cites the standard anthologies and adds one of the earliest bibliographies of Canadian literature (compiled by C. C. James, who was also involved in Rand's collection by providing "free access to his valuable and extensive collection of works of Canadian Poets" (Rand xi)) and a literary history that Dermot McCarthy observes is, like the early anthologies, organized according to a "social-political systematization" (35). Hardy writes that

> Songs of the Great Dominion, W. D. Lighthall, Treasury of Canadian Verse, T. H. Rand, Bibliography of Canadian Poetry, C. C. James, and Our Intellectual Strengths and Weaknesses, J. G. Bourinot, should be the foundation of such a department, and individual volumes constantly added. (7)

[17] Of course, this small, loosely-assembled literary

institution was exceedingly prototypical in comparison to the consolidation that began in earnest in the 1960s. As Robert Lecker has shown, it is often difficult to imagine what Canadian literature and its canon might have been like without definitive steps such as McClelland and Stewart's publication of its New Canadian Library series (1957), Carl F. Klinck et al.'s first edition of the Literary History of Canada (1965), and the lists of important Canadian literary works determined at the Calgary Conference (1978). See Lecker's "The Canonization of Canadian Literature: An Inquiry into Value" and Making It Real (Toronto: Anansi, 1995). Mary Vipond in her analysis of Canadian book reviews appearing between 1899 and 1918 corroborates Lecker's view. (xx) Carole Gerson concludes that

> If there is any correlation between the reviewing of books and their subsequent audience it would appear that the products of Canadian writers and publishers did not, as a group, have a major impact upon Canadian readers. (7)

[18] Newton connects Sangster, Mair, Lampman, W. W. Campbell, D. C. Scott, and Tom MacInnes to the civil service and Campbell, F. G. Scott, Roberts, D. C. Scott, and Lampman to the clergy. He concludes by stating that

> Most of the other poets in the 'canon' seem tc have been involved in, or related to people involved in high-level journalism, medicine or the law. They were an elite group, obviously: they were to a very large

> extent dependent upon public institutions for their living, and most of them came from 'good families' of the old-fashioned kind. There was little connection to the world of business. (Newton 13)

That Heavysege, who emerged from the Liverpool labouring class apprenticed as a wood-carver, could aspire to emulate this higher aesthetic demonstrates an exception that proves the rule. In a short biographical sketch, Woodcock observes that Heavysege was interested in achieving a measure of upward mobility, having "pretensions" to "gentility" (Woodcock 12).

[19] See, for instance, George Elliott Clarke's essay "The Road to North Hatley: Ralph Gustafson's Post-Colonial Odyssey" (Journal of Eastern Townships Studies/Revue d'études des Cantons de l'Est 9 (1996): 21-42) for a more contemporary Canadian example of how literary double consciousness can lead a writer to experiment with an idiom unsuited to his sensibility and experience.

[20] T. S. Eliot observed this phenomenon even though he was arguing for a notion of literary value and production that was fundamentally ahistorical and without socio-cultural referents:

> One of the facts that might come to light . . . is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. . . . [W]e endeavor to

> find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. (2171)

[21] For an anthology that parodies Confederation poetry see F. R. Scott and A. J. M. Smith's The Blasted Pine: An Anthology of Satire, Invective and Disrespectful Verse, Chiefly by Canadian Writers (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957. Reprinted 1962; Revised and enlarged editions 1967 and 1972).

[22] Members of The Ottawa Group were free-thinkers, who espoused Kant, Spencer and Huxley (Matthews 127).

[23] See, for instance, "God," "Old Hannah," "Song of Mary Magdalene," "Infinite," "Britannia," "May," "Whip-Poor-Will," "Heroes!," "Whene'er We May Wander," and "Garibaldi!" in Dewart's Selections.

[24] Lighthall also demonstrates an anxiety about Canadian social cohesiveness. He quotes a poem by "Fidelis" that responds with patriotic ardour to Tennyson's "Ode to the Queen," which suggested Canadian disloyalty and asked "Is this the tone of Empire?" (Lighthall xxxiii-xxxiv).

[25] Dewart's introduction is characterized by a language suggestive of intense affective response. Detail is rapidly piled upon detail. For instance, he writes that the purpose of poetry was

> to refine and elevate the spiritual in our nature; to sing of the earth's woes and sufferings, and pour the balm of a tender sympathy into sorrow-stricken hearts; to unveil, in its true deformity, the selfish cruelty

> of man to his fellow-man; and to portray the loveliness of unselfish benevolence, piety, and truth. The true Poet does for us what the eagle is said to do for her young, bears us aloft, and teaches us to fly. On the wings of his soaring spirit, we are borne into higher and more ethereal regions of thought, than our own unaided pinions could attain; where the silent forms of inanimate Nature awake to life, and pour their melodious eloquence upon the soul. He stands as a priest at Nature's high altars to expound her symbolic language, to unveil her hidden beauty, to dispense her sacred lessons, and to lead the mind up from the tokens of his presence on earth to the great Father of all in heaven. (Selections xiv)

[26] See, for instance, Tania Modleski's "Femininity as Mas(s)querade: A Feminist Approach to Mass Culture" (High Theory/Low Culture: Analyzing Popular Television and Film. Ed. Colin MacCabe. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. 37-52.) where Modleski initiates a deconstruction of the "dubious sexual analogies" (Modleski 52) made between mass culture and femininity. From Hawthorne to recent literary and theoretical treatments mass culture has been described as a distinctly "'feminized'" form associated with notions of passivity, consumption, and the "sentimentalization of culture" (Modleski 38, 40). According to Modleski this cultural link has been stated in two ways. An orthodox argument dating back to the

nineteenth century has used "femininity" to denote those qualities which define mass culture as a force promoting the decline of taste (Modleski 38). Ann Douglas's The Feminization of Mass Culture is discussed as a recently-acclaimed manifestation of this point of view. More recent projects, evinced in Manuel Puig's novel, Kiss of the Spider Woman, and Jean Baudrillard's theorizations about mass culture in his In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the Death of the Social, have aimed to radicalize this imagined relationship by making it a symbol of empowerment and cultural sovereignty (Modleski 39). Modleski suggests that both discourses perpetuate the historical victimization of women in discussions of mass culture (Modleski 51); they leave the insidious mechanism of its propagation unchallenged, the "powerful stereotypes, habits of language and unexamined . . . unconscious . . . psychic associations" (Modleski 39).

[27] The Canadian Forget Me Not was published sometime in January as Simpson's preface is dated "Niagara, January 9th. 1837" ([6]). It was intended to be ready earlier, perhaps by Christmas or by the first of the year, as was customary for British and American 'Forget Me Not' annuals. Simpson writes that he desired to produce the 1838 edition

> at a much earlier period than we were able to do in the present instance; and we respectfully request that all contributions may be forwarded to us, at as early a period previous to September, as is consistent with

the convenience with the respective authors. ([6]) No new editions were published.

[28] Shoberl's 1837 volume contained a poem by Agnes Strickland, sister to Moodie and Traill.

[29] See Robert Lecker's "Watson and Pierce's Our Canadian Literature Anthology and the Representation of Nation" (Canadian Poetry 38 (1996): 47-87.

[30] I borrow the term "conceptual rhyme" from a lecture on Coming Through Slaughter given by Brian Trehearne.

[31] The earliest story in the anthology is Sinclair Ross's "The Painted Door" from his The Lamp at Noon (1939). Unlike earlier national anthologies of prose fiction (i. e. Atwood's Oxford Anthology of Canadian Prose), Ondaatje does not feel obliged to include excerpts from nineteenth-century works.

[32] Out of sixty-three antecedent anthologies Alice Munro appeared thiry-one times. Sinclair Ross was included thirty-four times. See Appendix A for the inclusion rates of From Ink Lake's English-Canadian authors.

[33] Factoring in the five French-Canadian selections in translation makes this portrait even more conclusive.

Appendix A: Inclusion Rates for *From Ink Lake*'s English-Canadian Authors*

Author name	Inclusion Rate in Canadian Prose Anthologies Published before *From Ink Lake* (1990) (rate based on a survey of 63 antecedent anthologies)
Alice French	0
Joe Rosenblatt	0
John Kelly	0
Bharati Mukherjee	0
Carol Shields	0
Glenn Gould	0
Daniel David Moses	0
Elizabeth Smart	0
Dionne Brand	1
Rohinton Mistry	1
Charles Ritchie	1
David Richards	1
Guy Vanderhaeghe	1
Sean Virgo	1
Joy Kogawa	1
Wallace Stegner	2
Keath Fraser	2
Sandra Birdsell	2
George Bowering	3
Austin Clarke	3
Elisabeth Harvour	3
Timothy Findley	3
Shiela Watson	5
Matt Cohen	6
Leon Rooke	6
Alistair MacLeod	8
Joyce Marshall	8
Audrey Thomas	8
Rudy Wiebe	9
Margaret Atwood	11
Jack Hodgins	11
Clark Blaise	11
Hugh MacLennan	18
Hugh Hood	26
Mordecai Richler	27
Ethel Wilson	31
Alice Munro	32
Sinclair Ross	34
Stephen Leacock	37

* These figures are drawn from a database designed for Robert Lecker. It surveys a total of 65 Canadian prose anthologies. For a comprehensive analysis and a bibliography of the anthologies surveyed see Robert Lecker's "Anthologizing English-Canadian Fiction: Some Canonical Trends" in *Making It Real*.

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