Fact, Fiction, and the Tradition of Historical Narratives in Nineteenth-Century Canadian Children's Literature

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Résumé: *Imbu de sa souveraineté nouvellement acquise, le Canada anglais a utilisé, vers la fin du dix-neuvième siècle, la littérature pour la jeunesse comme un outil privilégié, afin de développer son identité nationale et de susciter l'adhésion des jeunes à ses valeurs culturelles. L'attention des auteurs s'est particulièrement portée sur la production des oeuvres à caractère historique, dont l'étude fait ressortir l'existence de tensions idéologiques et politiques au tournant du vingtième siècle.*

Summary: *During the late nineteenth century, as Canada came to terms with its new role as an independent nation, attempts were made to strengthen a sense of Canadian national pride and identity. In English-speaking Canada, children's literature was regarded as a means through which a strong identification with the new confederation could be achieved in the nation's youth. Writers were beginning to examine the events of Canada's past through historical textbooks, poems, songs, and novels. A study of these historical narratives for children reveals some of the ideological tensions that existed within Canada at the dawn of the twentieth century.*

> At Queenston's Heights and Lundy's Lane,
> Our brave fathers, side by side,
> For freedom, homes, and loved ones dear,
> Firmly stood and nobly died.
> And those dear rights which they maintained,
> We swear to yield them never!
> Our watchword evermore shall be,
> The Maple Leaf forever!
>
> (A. Muir, "The Maple Leaf Forever")

The way a nation conceives of itself and its place in the world is revealed in the way it conceives of its history, and the way in which this history is communicated to its children. The concept of Canadian history at the turn of the twentieth century as expressed through the literature of the day, reveals the nation's ambiguous position as it struggled to come to terms with its new status as an independent nation. Post-colonial critics and writers have argued that reclaiming the past is an important step in the process of colonised people finding a voice and an identity.[1] The same can be said of Canada in the post-Confederation era, when the nation was attempting to define its own voice and identity. In Canadian literature of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, this reclaiming of the past involved a revaluation of Canadian history from the time of the first French explorers, to the defining moments of the early-nineteenth century.

Children's literature of the period did not escape the trend toward a new exploration of Canadian history. From textbooks for the classroom, to historical poems, songs, and novels, there is an implicit sense in this literature of a new emphasis being placed on the relation between a feeling of national identity, and an awareness of national history. This link between history and identity is one that continues to be of importance in Canadian literature to this day. In the August 25, 2001 issue of the *Globe and Mail*, Susan Perren illustrates the contemporary relevance of history in the world of children's fiction. In her review of several recently-published works, Perren reports that "Canadian history is the new big thing" (D10) in children's books. She cites as examples of this trend the recent reprinting of G.A. Henty's 1896 novel, *With Wolfe in Canada*, and the publication of a fictional diary of a young girl in 1897 Guelph, Ontario, by Jean Little. At the beginning of her review Perren asks, "What [...] can explain the proliferation of books aimed at acquainting young Canadians with their country's past? And the purpose? Knowing their country's past, will they grow into a sense of what its future could be [...]?" (D10). The aim of these books, Perren goes on to say, is "clearly to impart a sense of life in Canada 100 or so years ago" (D10). What is striking about this review, is that it itself could have appeared 100 years ago and could even have had Henty's *With Wolfe in Canada* as one of the books under review. For Canadian history is *not* "the new big thing" in children's books, but has a long tradition in Canadian juvenile fiction, as Henty's tale about the 1750s would indicate. He was, in fact, writing at a time when Canadian history was emerging as a key subject in children's literature, illustrating a growing awareness of the fact that a strong sense of Canadian history could be of great importance for the nation's future.

Popular topics among children's writers of the period included the early days of the Fur Trade, Indian life in early Canada, the period of French rule, and the military exploits between the French and the English, and the Canadians and the Americans. From out of these tales of the past, Canadian

writers were beginning to build a new mythology, and to project a new vision of both the country's past, and its future. In the process, they were revealing a great deal about the reality of their nineteenth-century present. The purpose of historical narratives in the early days of the Dominion was not merely to "impart a sense of life in Canada" (Perren D10) in previous times, but was to do something else which Susan Perren recognizes as a purpose behind the current trend of historical fiction for children — namely, to provide a sense of what Canada's future could be, and the tools necessary for that vision to become a reality.

The importance placed on instilling an awareness of Canadian history in the nation's children can be seen in an article from the May, 1901, edition of the Cobourg, Ontario periodical *The Canadian Boy*. The author, J.W. Bengough, begins with a criticism of the existing accounts of Canadian history. Not only do they fail to give an accurate and complete picture of early Canada, but they also fail to adequately engage or interest the child reader:

> When we think of the old days we call historic (as if we were not ourselves engaged in making history) the picture presented to our minds seems to be filled with grown up people, chiefly quite gray and venerable. Perhaps the habit affects historians as well as common folk, and that may be the reason why there is so very little mention of boys and girls in the books they write. [...] But then, of course, most of the writers who have set themselves the task of dealing with the History of the Dominion have seemed to feel it necessary to make their works as dry as possible, and no doubt think that to give space to such a lively, sportive topic as boyhood suggests, would be quite out of character. (Bengough 10)

One of the ways by which Bengough hopes to make Canadian history come alive for children, is to provide them with ancedotes to which they can relate. He sees this as something that can be accomplished by sharing the stories of other children in early Canada, in spite of the historians' lack of attention to such figures:

> Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that boys existed in the long ago in Canada as well as elsewhere. Very little seems to be known, or at least told, of the young days of any of the distinguished men whose lives really make up the History of our country, but undoubtedly every one of them was at one time a boy, and thought the rolling of hoops or finding of birds' nests vastly more important than any possible matters of state could be. (10)

Bengough's mission is not just to entertain his readers, however, it is to educate them. In this case, the subject of his lesson is John Graves Simcoe, and Bengough ensures the interest of his young readers by first introducing Simcoe's son:

> I happen to have come across some particulars about a boy who is of some historical interest to Canadians through bearing a name well known to all who have read anything of Canadian annals; I mean Frank Simcoe, the son of Col. John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, who came out to take charge of the affairs of the new province in the year 1791. (10)

While ostensibly telling the story of Frank Simcoe, the author in fact imparts information about the history of Canada. Even in this early paragraph the reader learns far more about John Graves Simcoe than about his son. Frank Simcoe is the device by which the reader's attention is procured and maintained, while an account of John Simcoe's role in Canada's history is given.

While writers such as Bengough began to centre historical narratives around young characters in order to cater to a young readership, there were also a number of textbooks of history designed for Canadian schools. These texts reveal the difficulty nineteenth-century historians were having in presenting a *national* history, rather than one that demonstrated a provincial or ethnic bias. Henry H. Miles's *The Child's History of Canada*, published in Montreal in 1870, demonstrates the difficulty of reconciling the realities of history with idealised notions of both the nation's past, and its present. To a certain extent, Miles demonstrates a sense of a common history in Canada, rather than a separate "French" or "English" history. Important French historical figures are presented as Canadian heroes, as is evident when Miles claims that "every lover of Canada thinks with pride and pleasure of Samuel de Champlain" (23). Yet he later betrays the continuing tensions between Anglophones and Francophones in Canada in his discussion of the exile of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in the middle of the eighteenth century. While acknowledging the "very sad nature" (90) of these events, Miles betrays a sense of division between French and English interests when he raises doubts about the accuracy of other historical accounts of the events: "Some French writers declare that no less than 7000 Acadians were removed to New England. There is, however, good reason for believing that the true number was between three and four thousand" (91). Such observations are a reflection of existing tensions in nineteenth-century Canadian society.

Yet attempts were being made at this time to present Canadian children with a knowledge of the past that would contribute to their sense of Canada as a unified nation with a common history. The fact that increasing importance was being placed on the production of educational history books for children is demonstrated in the August, 1897, issue of the children's journal *Home and Youth*. The editorial discusses the completion of the *Dominion School History* and cites it as an event of extreme national importance: "Perhaps the most important of Canadian events during the year 1897 will be the completion of the new Canadian school history and its introduction into the public schools of all the provinces and territories of the Dominion,

from the Atlantic to the Pacific" ("Point" 1). This editorial stresses the significance of the nationwide approach being taken in the production of this text. Canada has always been a nation of great regional diversity (and this was certainly the case at the end of the nineteenth century), yet there was clearly a desire to emphasise "Canadian" identity and interests in this text, rather than merely those of individual provinces. Producing books on *Canadian* history, was one of the ways in which a sense of national unity could be achieved. The editorial on the new *Dominion School History* in *Home and Youth* further illustrates the attempt to place national interests ahead of individual, and possibly divisive, provincial ones: "The study of the same history by all the school children of the Dominion cannot fail to have a lasting influence upon the minds of our young people and will undoubtedly have the effect of strengthening Canadian sentiment" ("Point" 1). This article stresses the "adoption of a common history by the various provinces of the Dominion" (1) as a project that was a long time in the making. Dating the beginning of the process from 1888, this editorial emphasises the national process that led to the final stages of the book's creation. Meetings were held with representatives from most provinces and by July 1892, "the governments of all the provinces and territories had expressed approval and appointed representatives on a committee called the Dominion History Committee" ("Point" 2). It was the desire of this committee that the book have "what was purely provincial so subdued as to give greater prominence to facts interesting to the whole Dominion" ("Point" 2). It was, in other words, the job of this book to construct a national history, rather than a provincially biased one. Or, as the editorial in *Home and Youth* states, "the history of the different provinces was to be related as nearly as possible concurrently and in such a way as to show the interests they had in common from the first and the steps that led to the confederation of the various provinces into one Dominion in 1867" (3). The insistence on the need for a history that was balanced between the interests of individual provinces underscores the existing late-nineteenth-century fear that the smaller provinces were dissatisfied by the perceived imbalance of power in the confederation. The discussion of this particular history text reveals the clear attempt at this time to solidify a national sentiment, and strengthen the sense of a unified confederation in Canadian children.

While such educational history texts were being written for children, there was an even larger amount of historical fiction aimed at young readers. Canada's past was seen as a rich source of literary inspiration, yet these narratives centred largely around a few main features of the Canadian historical landscape. There were tales of the early days of settlement and exploration, including narratives that focused on the Fur Trade, and the expanding settlement of the West. In addition to these tales, there was a great amount of literature being produced that dealt with Canada's military history. These historical narratives offer a blend of fact and fiction, and a range of interpretation of the events of the nation's past. It was in this past that the seeds

of the growing notion of Canadian identity could be found, and it was a past that was increasingly being explored through children's fiction.

One of the genres through which it was being explored was fantasy literature. One work that provides evidence of this is a collection entitled *A Wonder Web of Stories* by Margaret Charlton and Caroline Fraser. Published in Montreal in 1892, this text contains a story by Margaret Charlton entitled "Captain Pepper, The Valiant Knight of the Laurentians." It tells the tale of a boy named Fred who, while reading his book of geography and history in his garden, becomes frustrated with his lesson, and decides that the Laurentian Mountains (the subject of his studies) are "not of much consequence" (Charlton 107). Upon declaring this, Fred is greeted by an irate little elf who is disgusted by the boy's ignorance. In order to educate him, a group of elves carry him off to the Laurentians, where he encounters many strange sights and figures. At one point, he meets an owl, who helps to show that Fred is not so ignorant of Canadian history as it first appears:

> Then, to Fred's astonishment, he made out that the owl was saying: 'Jacques Cartier, John Cabot, Sebastian Cabot, Champlain. No, Columbus; yes, that is the name: Columbus — Christopher Coloumbus — it was who came over in three ships.'
>
> 'Oh, you are all wrong!' exclaimed Fred, unable to keep quiet any longer. 'It was Cartier who came over in three ships.'
>
> 'No such thing; do you mean to tell me he could separate himself into three parts. Oh, you clever boy! you wise boy! Did you take the prize in history in your class?'
>
> 'No, I did not,' said Fred, getting angry at the bird's tone; 'but I know it was Cartier who came over in three ships. [...] I think you are a very stupid bird, for all you look so wise [...].' (Charlton 122-123)

Fred's awareness of Canadian history develops over the course of the narrative as he encounters the various spirits of the place. Finally, he is taken on a flight with the fairy Dew-Drop to see those parts of Canada of which he is ignorant. After seeing the riches of the country from coast to coast, Dew-Drop takes Fred across the ocean to what she tells him is, "the home of the mighty nation you have sprung from" (136). Here he gazes upon Queen Victoria. Upon their return, the fairy asks Fred if he is pleased by all that he has seen, to which he replies, "'Oh, yes, fair lady! ... I shall never, never forget what I have seen. And my country, I shall love it now as I never loved it before, it is so grand, so beautiful, so vast. Oh, I could die for it!'" (137-138). Dew-Drop is pleased with his response and the tale, which begins with Fred's study of Canada's past, ends with the fairy's vision of its future:

> 'Once more I rejoice. Greed and gain will yet be over-reached and conquered by the clarion tones of patriotism. "Down with all treason to-

> wards our beloved country" shall be heard ringing throughout the land, and he, who for so long manfully strove for the glory of his country, will hear and rejoice. Oh, youth, remember that should the time ever come when thy country shall need a strong arm to defend her rights, see to it that thine is uplifted in her defence.' (138)

Charlton's work begins with a lesson in history, but finishes by imparting this message to the child reader of the present, who is made to feel the promise of the nation's future.

While Charlton's tale is one example of the use of fantasy to engage the reader in the subjects of Canadian geography, politics, and history, and to inspire a sense of pride and identity, most nineteenth-century children's writers were writing more straightforward historical fiction for this purpose.[2] These works demonstate that as the century progressed, writers were turning away from accounts of British history, and beginning to examine people and events of Canada's past. In 1891, a collection of poems and songs was published in Toronto under the title *Raise the Flag and Other Patriotic Canadian Songs and Poems*. The preface of this collection outlines the growing movement of recognizing important national events:

> In February last a deputation [...] waited upon the Minister of Education, to advocate the raising of a flag on the school houses on national anniversaries. [...] The *Empire* newspaper has also offered a large flag to the school in each county which produces the best essay on the subject of 'Raising the Flag'.
>
> As an encouragement to the children, who have written the best essays in each school, [...] a few loyal Canadians have compiled [...] this little collection of Patriotic Songs and Poems, as the most appropriate remembrance to be given to the scholars who have written the best essays on these subjects. (Preface iii)

We are told that the "songs and poems selected [...] strike the keynote of Canadian history and sentiment" (Preface iii). And the preface also makes clear what the purpose of this book is:

> Grateful acknowledgment is hereby given to the authors, whose poems are here published with the object of spreading among the children of our land those loyal and patriotic sentiments which animated our fathers and helped them to defend and hand down to us the rights and privileges which we now enjoy. (iv)

The subjects represented in this collection are common among children's writers of the period. Military exploits are particularly popular fare, and from the English defeat of the French at Quebec, to the battles of the War of 1812, Canada is seen to posess her share of military heroes.

Two novelists of the era who choose to deal with the subject of the defeat of the French forces in North America are J.M. Oxley and E. Everett-Green. Everett-Green's novel of 1899 entitled *French and English: A Story of the Struggle in America*, tells the tale from the side of a group of men who volunteer to aid the English cause. Everett-Green was a British writer, and the apparent bias towards the English in this novel raises the question of how much of such historical tales is based on fact, and how much on fiction. Throughout the text, there is an overwhelming sense of the English being in the right and an early passage in the novel, in which an English character resolves to fight the French, demonstrates a clear bias:

> The old instinctive hatred of centuries between French and English, never really dead, now leaped to life in his breast. He had heard plenty of talk during his boyhood of France's boundless pretensions with regard to the great New World of the West, and how she sought, by the simple process of declaring territory to be hers, to extend her power over millions of miles of the untrodden plains and forests, which she could never hope to populate. (Everett-Green 24)

While not afraid to criticize the English at points throughout the novel, commenting on their "internal jealousies, and [...] incompetent commanders" (108), the tale is clearly told from the point of view of the victors. Positive portrayals of French characters do occur in the book, but these figures themselves are seen to acknowledge the superiority of their foes. One such figure is the young French girl Corinne, who is favourably impressed by the English:

> I have heard things since I have been here that have filled my heart with sorrow and anger. I have been ashamed of my countrymen! I have felt that our foes are nobler than ourselves, and that God must surely arise and fight for them if these abominations are suffered to continue. (Everett-Green 136)

A great deal is made of the divisions between the French and the English at the time of the battle of Quebec, but the respect accorded to certain French characters (such as it is), does reflect the fact that by the time of Everett-Green's novel, the two linguistic groups were now of common citizenship. Furthermore, despite the fierce loyalty to the English that is demonstrated in this text, James Wolfe himself reflects on the future independence that the nation will have from Britain:

> We shall never have a second Canada out there such as France has won — a country wholly dependent upon the one at home, looking always to her for government, help, care, money. No, no; the spirit of those who went forth from England was utterly different. They are English

> subjects still, but they want to rule themselves after their own way. They will never be helpless and dependent; they will be more like to shake our yoke from off their necks when they arrive at man's estate. But what matter if they do? We shall be brothers, even though the sea roll between them. The parent country has sent them forth, and must protect them till they are able to protect themselves [...]. After that we shall see. But for my part I prefer that struggling spirit of independence and desire after self-government. It can be carried too far; but it shows life, energy, youth, and strength. (Everett-Green 254-255)

Wolfe's musings are an acknowledgement of the independence that Canada enjoyed at the time of this novel's publication. While ostensibly portraying the events of a much earlier time, Everett-Green's novel also provides glimpses of a nineteenth-century reality.

J.M. Oxley's novel *Fife and Drum at Louisbourg* of 1899 (the same year in which Everett-Green's work was published), also deals with the defeat of the French. This time the tale is told from the perspective of twin boys from Boston nicknamed Prince and Pickle who embark on the expedition to Louisbourg. Initially, they share the attitude toward the French that is displayed in Everett-Green's novel: "They had been brought up to regard the French as the very essence of all that was hateful in humanity, and when the attack on Louisbourg was mooted, nobody in Massachusetts was more eager than they for its successful execution" (Oxley 90-91). Yet when the boys begin to encounter these Frenchmen, there are signs that their attitude toward them is somewhat uncertain. As Prince observes; "we must seem just as strange to them, and doubtless they take us to be the greatest rascals in the world" (Oxley 141). Pickle, too, begins to see things from the French perspective, after he is imprisoned in the city:

> Pickle's heart was moved to sincere pity by the discomforts the unfortunate inhabitants of the beleaguered town had to endure. [...] Gladly would Pickle have lightened their misery had it been in his power. It was not against them the colonial forces were waging war, yet they had to suffer just as if they were responsible. (Oxley 261)

Oxley's novel, like Everett-Green's, leaves the reader with an uncertain hold on what the relations between the French and English were like. Yet Oxley was a Canadian, and his story portrays the French in a kinder light than Everett-Green's. Both of these works were published in 1899, a time at which the country was largely divided over the issue of conscription for the war in South Africa, and the ambiguous nature of the relations between the French and the English may be a reflection of existing tensions in the nineteenth century.

As these novels indicate, much of the children's literature of the day

was concerned with military themes. Poems and stories were written about James Wolfe and the French leader Montcalm, and the more recent events of the War of 1812 were also popular fare for these works. These tales reflect the militaristic tone of the nineteenth century, an era in which youth brigades and the Boy Scouts movement flourished. It was also a time of military activity within the British Empire, and loyalty to this empire was still a strong force in post-Confederation Canada. Tales of earlier victories of the English over their enemies in North America — be they French, Americans, or Indians — were designed in part to bolster a sense of pride in Canada's place within the British Empire.

Nevertheless, these historical narratives also illustrate a growing awareness of the need to celebrate Canadian achievement. Canada was developing its own list of heroes, and they were being found in different places in its history. A poem by William Thomas White, published in the *Raise the Flag* collection, illustrates the way in which Canada was beginning to form its own mythology and create its own heroes. In "The Battle of Queenston Heights," White places Isaac Brock in the same league as some great classical heroes:

> Bring forth the book of heroes' deeds, and to your listening flock,
> Read reverently of Queenston Heights and the death of Isaac Brock.
>
> Oh, there are some amongst us who spurn the patriot's name,
> Who say our country has no past, no heroes known to fame.
>
> They talk of bold Leonidas who held the pass of blood,
> And how Horatius Cocles braved swollen Tiber's flood.
>
> [.......................................]
>
> For Canada their voice is mute, yet history's pages tell
> That braver blood was never spilt than where her heroes fell. (lines 9-20)

The poet then goes on to describe the battle with the American forces, who at first appear to be gaining the victory. But Brock manages to turn the tide:

> What spell so much could nerve them in that losing battle's shock,
> 'Courage, boys! It is the General! Onward comrades! On with Brock!'
>
> Now forward to the battery! They lend a ready ear;
> There's a hero's form to lead them and a hero's voice to cheer.
>
> And o'er the level plain they press, and up the sloping hill,
> 'Mid hiss of shot and volleys' smoke his cry is 'Onward!' still.
>
> And now they pass the low ravine, they clamber o'er the wall;
> The fatal death-shot strikes him; they see their leader fall.

> 'Push on, push on, York volunteers!' brave words- they were his last,
> And like the vision of a dream the charging column passed.
>
> [.....................................]
>
> One spirit moved, one thought inspired that gallant little band,
> That foot of no invading foe should e'er pollute their land. (37-54)

The poet then shifts the narrative from the account of the battle, to his vision of the future. A future in which Canadians will speak of Brock as a great hero:

> And thou, whose sacred dust entombed on yonder summit lies,
> Beneath that noble monument far-reaching toward the skies,
>
> Thy name shall be a holy word, a trumpet-note to all,
> When bravery's arm is needed and they hear their country's call.
>
> And future sires shall take their sons at evening on their knee,
> And tell the old tale over, and thus shall speak of thee-
>
> "His is the noblest name we have in all our bright array;
> He taught our youth to falter not tho' death might bar the way;
>
> "He showed our might, he led our arms, he conquered, tho' he fell;
> He gave up all he had- his life- for the land he loved so well." (63-72)

Thus, the British-born Isaac Brock, who did not come to Canada until 1802, becomes one of the country's most famous heroes.

While it is evident that Canada's military past was a popular subject for nineteenth-century writers, Canadian history was being explored in many different ways and tales of the early days of the Fur Trade were also particularly popular. One such tale is W.H.G. Kingston's novel *Snow-Shoes and Canoes; or, The Early Days of a Fur-Trader in the Hudson's Bay Territory*. As the title would suggest, this work tells the story of a group of early fur traders in the area of the Red River. While the book is full of the adventures of the era — namely numerous battles with the Indians, various hunting expeditions, and the joys and trials of canoeing and snow-shoeing — it too illustrates a trend in historical fiction to use history to project a vision of the future. After entertaining his reader with stories about life in the days of the fur-trade, Kingston concludes his novel by presenting a picture of nineteenth-century Manitoba and the promise it holds for the future:

> Though the Hudson's Bay Company still retain their trading-posts, the whole of this vast region now forms a part of the Canadian Dominion. A large city, with churches and buildings of all descriptions, has sprung up close to Fort Garry on the left bank of the Red River, called Winnipeg,

> which contains from fifteen to twenty thousand inhabitants [...].
>
> Many of the lakes and rivers on which formerly birch bark canoes alone were to be seen, are now navigated by steamers [...] while a band of Government surveyors have for some years past been employed in ascertaining the best course for a railway, which running entirely through the British territory, will one day form a connexion between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
>
> From the above account of the country, it will be seen how great is the change which has taken place since the events I have described in the preceding pages. I was then a mere lad; I am now a grey-headed man. It was then wild in the extreme. It is still wild enough to satisfy the most romantic; but it now contains many of the elements of civilization, and affords every opportunity of success to hardy, industrious men desirous of forming a home for themselves and their families. (Kingston 335-336)

Kingston too, while finding inspiration and entertainment in tales of the past, sees those events as part of a chain of progress, leading to a bright future.

The historical narratives being written for children at the end of the nineteenth century by both Canadian and British writers, are a blend of fact and fiction. In some senses, Canada's past is idealised as a place of endless excitement and adventure. But in another sense it is the harsh realities of this past that are themselves seen as a source of national pride and identity. The struggles faced by Canada's early inhabitants as they worked to create a nation are acknowledged, and the importance of this type of sacrifice for national interests is emphasised in the literature that was being read by children at the turn of the twentieth century.

Historians were beginning to look at Canada's history from a new perspective, and it was considered to be as important to educate children about the events that occurred on Canadian soil, as it was to teach them about European history. As the nation struggled to overcome conflicts that arose between provinces in the new confederation and to ensure that the new Dominion would succeed, increasing importance was placed on the development of a national perspective. In order to instil a sense of Canadian pride and identity in the first generations after confederation, writers were both examining, and constructing, Canadian history. They were building a new list of heroes and heroines to inspire the nation's youth. The historical narratives being produced at the turn of the twentieth century provide evidence of a nation that was beginning to claim its own past, and to see in its history all the potential it held for the future.

Notes

1 For further readings in this area see Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, and Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism.*

2 For a discussion of the dominance of realistic fiction in Canadian literature see the introduction to David Ketterer's *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy.*

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Elizabeth Galway is currently completing a PhD thesis is entitled "From Nursery Rhymes to Nationhood: Constructing Canadian National Identity through Children's Literature, 1870-1910". This article is based in part on research conducted for the third chapter of this thesis.