

Child Heroes of the Working Class: Working-Class Tales for Youth in Nineteenth-Century Canada

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Résumé : Cette dissertation est la deuxième dans une série qui cherche à examiner la courte fiction d'aventure publiée par et à propos du Canada et les Canadiens dans les périodiques pour les jeunes des États-Unis et de la Grande-Bretagne entre les années 1870 et 1914. Si souvent analysés pour les vues colonialistes et impérialistes, les contes ont aussi beaucoup à révéler au sujet des systèmes de croyances et de valeurs enfoncés. Parmi cette collection de contes ouvrières on trouve de l'évidence que les valeurs considérées évidentes pour les éducateurs et réformateurs des moyennes et hautes classes ainsi que les auteurs des contes étaient contestables, sinon antithétiques aux valeurs de la communauté ouvrière. Un genre de focalisation double de voie de classe se produit qui fait un examen à nouveau de perceptions de classe et d'allégeances essentielles.

Summary: This essay, the second in a series, examines short adventure fiction by and about Canada and Canadians published in popular U.S. and British periodicals for youth between 1870 and 1914. While similar tales have often been analyzed from colonialist and imperialist perspectives, the unfamiliar stories in this collection reveal much about imbedded societal beliefs and value systems that speak directly to working-class ideology. These stories provide evidence that the values considered self-evident to middle-class authors, readers, educators, and social reformers were questionable, if not antithetical, to the values of the working-class people who form the subject of many of the tales. A double focalization of class voice occurs in these stories in ways that make a reconsideration of class perceptions and allegiances essential.

Modern readers customarily view nineteenth-century Canadian adventure stories for children and young adults through a postcolonial lens that recognizes ways in which young Canadian empire-builders ape the imperialist acts of the “motherland,” Great Britain. Readers readily recognize the imperialist boy hero of tales that seem to invite a customary — almost involuntary — response to a set of ideological and linguistic signals. Certainly, the collection of roughly 450 adventure tales written by Canadians or non-Canadians about Canada and its citizens found in three British periodicals for young people (*Boys’ Own Paper*, *The Captain*, and *Young England*) and four U.S. periodicals for the same demographic (*Youth’s Companion*, *Harper’s Round Table*, *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, and *St. Nicholas*) falls into this reader-response category. Many of these tales published between 1870 and the outbreak of World War I are formula fiction involving intrepid conquerors and/or colonialist animals. In these stories, heroism comes in a specific male package, derived from imported notions of empire, with honesty, pluck, and loyalty riding on the back of adventure and leading inexorably to an ultimate triumph.

This paper will focus on a subset of approximately 100 stories within the larger collection, centering on working-class younger people who know the immediacy of their locale based on years of childhood toil. The tales valorize the skills their protagonists use to survive under extreme conditions and against great odds as well as their capacity for independent action, which usually occurs in the absence of expert/elder advice. All the stories are presented realistically, some approaching naturalism in their candour. Conflict in the lives of the working-class characters is especially intense because their choices are always elemental, their lives always on the line. The protagonists’ responses to daily work and to the demands of family and community against the backdrop of religion and culture can tell us much about the prevalent ideologies of the era.

These working-class adventure tales are written by middle-class authors, however, which suggests a kind of double focalization. We hear two voices, rarely in harmony, intoning the events and the perspectives. Interestingly enough, however, the co-option of the working-class voice by a wealthier class is rarely complete, and thorough silencing does not occur. The vigorous emergence of a non-dominant class voice (seldom does the working class proclaim the moral imperatives of an era) articulated through the voice of the middle class seems remarkable: we have become so accustomed to the postcolonial approach to these tales that we do not expect to hear voices that question the value of education, that find the cloth of religion transparent, or that hold to social roles no longer current in the dominant culture of the time.

In his recent essay “Of Solitudes and Borders: Double-Focalized Canadian Books for Children” published in *Canadian Children’s Literature* in 2003, Perry Nodelman expands the concept of double focalization to include

border issues between Canada and the U.S., the differing voices of adult author and child reader, the varying perspectives of people of a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and the mentality of garrison/town vs. wilderness/nature that comprises the older descriptions of double focalization in Canadian literature by critic Northrop Frye (70, 72-73). Nodelman observes, "What could be a clearer expression of Canadian interests (and hopes) than voices speaking alternately out of two solitudes about similar things and . . . finding a way to connect to each other before their stories come to an end?" (60). The phrase "two solitudes" refers to Hugh MacLennan's concept of how French and English languages constitute a literal double focalization in Canadian literature. His metaphor of two solitary voices also describes the isolating differences of two classes. The middle-class author and the working-class subject both speak to a similar vision of those jobs essential in constructing nineteenth-century Canada. Inasmuch as this collection of tales is successful as literature, the authors connect the two voices before the stories end.

Nodelman does not work with double focalization of class voice, however, because his essay explores contemporary young adult novels, which may not require an examination of class issues as does the Canadian short adventure fiction of the nineteenth century that is the focus of my study. I will focus the following discussion on the jobs typical of Canadian child labourers of the nineteenth century and the social issues surrounding their performance of these jobs: mining, construction, fishing and sealing, farming, factory work, women in service, the education of working children, as well as religion and spiritual matters.

Canada's pre-industrial economy was based on primary resources and the extraction of staples, with changes made gradually as industrialization advanced. Each work setting provided opportunities for creating heroic adventure stories. For example, W.E. MacLellan's working-class hero, fourteen-year-old "Dannie Morgan" (1913), demonstrates all the pluck, grit, endurance, and adventurousness of the Imperial boy hero despite his class origins. He never translates his achievements into social mobility, the typical outcome of the Imperial boy's story, because he was born into the working class and is expected by the larger society to stay there. A disastrous fire kills 150 men and boys in the mine close on the heels of his own father's death in the Springmount coal mine two years earlier. These fictional disasters echo the real-life mine disaster in Springhill, Nova Scotia in 1891, where 125 men and seventeen boys aged sixteen and younger died (McIntosh 39). Dannie's decision to go back into the mine comes as no surprise. Dreams of class mobility in tales of working-class protagonists reflect those of their middle-class authors rather than their working-class protagonists. In Canadian culture, Michael S. Cross suggests, citizens did not look to change social classes so much as to live well within their own class (3).

Despite a battle against time and the rising, deadly choke-damp, Dannie returns to save “little Ted,” the truant son of a family of higher economic circumstances who has been sent to work in the mines as punishment for his lack of scholarly application. When middle-class Ted pleads never to go into the mine again and pledges to attend school, we tend to accept this resolution on the basis of early-twenty-first-century middle-class values. For at least 150 years, middle-class culture has valorized education and a salary above working with one’s hands for day wages. The modern reader sighs: at last Ted has come to his senses, is cured of his laziness, and will go back to school where he belongs. Besides, we are familiar with the Sunday School literature of the era with its tales of the recalcitrant child who has a change of heart.

Working-class Dannie, on the other hand, goes back to work the first day the mine reopens “in nowise impressed by having been ‘featured’ in all the newspapers as ‘the boy hero of Springmount’” (398). For Dannie to refuse class mobility as part of the hero-package is a class marker. Only scions of the affluent middle-class could hope to advance toward the established pattern of aristo-military heroism that Canada inherited from England. The hero’s rejection of class mobility also mirrors the legacy of Romantic individualism and the celebration of the common man that flourished in the nineteenth century. Yet another interpretation could be that Dannie’s noble deed was influenced by the Knights of Labor. An influential labour union of the era, the KOL was created by the middle-classes to “lift” the lower orders. They preached the ethos of the dignity of labour as an essential plank in their social platform (Heron 22-24).

Other elements of this story parallel the patterns of Sunday-School tracts: the boy takes over his father’s job in the coal mine at age twelve in order to provide for his widowed mother, impoverished by her husband’s death. This Canadian working-class tale, however, is different in tone and characterization from typical religious tracts. Whereas the middle-class authors view the protagonists of tracts as pitiable — an object for tears — the resolution to the conflict demonstrates how education will save the youth from his or her awful condition. In contrast, the young miner in the Canadian tale accepts the perils of his job and stolidly goes about his business like any of the older miners. MacLellan’s protagonist feels the weight of the family’s dependence on his wages for their survival.

Well might we ask what such young boys are doing in a mine. We recognize MacLellan’s description of “a boy known as ‘little Ted’ — a mere child whose father had sent him into the pit because he utterly refused to attend school” (398) as very similar to the boys historian Robert McIntosh describes. As young as age eight, boys were hired because of their size to do particular jobs (35): some were hired to haul sledges of coal, crawling on all fours where horses could not go (37). Similarly, young Trappers opened doors (called “traps”) that operated the ventilation system, work-

ing alone in the dark for long hours. MacLellan explains that, on the day of the explosion, Ted's job was to "driv[e] an empty coal-box" hauled by a horse who dies in the explosion (398). Usually the task of hauling full coal boxes went to older boys (generally ages fourteen to seventeen), who were called Drivers because of the horses they led (McIntosh 37).

As readers, we assume that when Dannie ignores the fuss made over his heroism, he is being modest in the best middle-class Christian tradition. In fact, Danny makes no connection between his humane act and class promotion; no such expectation on his part exists. His rescue of Ted demonstrates his innate sense of humanity. In a fine piece of understatement, the author writes: "Dannie made no remarks except that 'It wasn't anythin'," to those who praised him to his face. No one knows what he did when he met his mother at their home" (398). But we can suspect: Dannie knows that if the mine is closed a long time and if he is out of work for too long, he and his family will go hungry. No wonder he re-enters the mine the first day it is open. Perhaps too few middle-class readers understand such necessity, then or now.

Another miner deemed a hero for merely "doing his duty" is the title character in E.W. Thomson's story "John Macbride" (1891). Action is central to this tale, which focuses on the psychology and morality of an ethically-conscious (but not very intelligent) miner who must move two cans of pure nitroglycerine gently down an icy path to the men in the pit. When the narrator ruefully acknowledges that his readers have undoubtedly come up with the solution to Macbride's dilemma long before he does, the levity of the comment significantly alters the tone. Can we infer that a virtuous, albeit less intelligent, protagonist is a fitting subject for humour, however gently applied? Or, is the miner a humorous character merely because he is a member of the working class, because he isn't very bright, or because he is less educated? The narrator doesn't allow the reader to linger over the matter. He quickly shifts back to the heroic nature of the working-class miner: "Nevertheless, I hold Macbride to have been a hero, because he had resolved to die rather than make a motion that might have sent death down among those men" (611).

Construction workers also have their own protocols for heroism. Norman Duncan's tale of bridge building, aptly entitled "'Tween Earth and Sky" (1902), features characters who work hundreds of feet in the air with nothing but their good sense of balance between them and catastrophe. In this story of management/worker conflict, Johnson, the foreman of a bridge-building crew (orphaned as a child), decides to adopt a sixteen-year-old orphan who shows unusual drive and pluck. When "the kid" is suddenly paralyzed by fear while on a high girder, Johnson saves his life by gruffly ordering him down. The next day, the kid proves his courage by climbing to the same spot and dancing a breakdown in front of Johnson and all the other workers. This foolhardy deed forges a friendship between the fore-

man and the kid. The title, then, encompasses both literal and metaphorical meanings: the friendship, the dance, and the girders become the sky; the lower, less honourable impulses of the workers become the earth.

This tale gives evidence of a Second Industrial Revolution that swept all of North America at the turn of the twentieth century. As social historian Gregory S. Kealey notes, the management style of the era emphasized science and efficiency in what was called the “drive system” (336). The foreman’s role was expanded with the expectation that a substantial part of his job was to pressure workers for higher productivity, a policy that created both fear and loathing of management. In “‘Tween Earth and Sky,” Duncan tells us outright that the bridge builders dislike Johnson because he harasses and bullies them. Perhaps because of his middle-class perspective, the author does not condemn the foreman, who, by dint of hard work and perseverance, has raised himself into middle-management. Duncan readily understands how competitive capitalism, based on the new immigrant proletariat, works: as Kealey suggests, “Laissez faire was a myth that applied only in the social realm of government activity” (333). Thus, it had nothing to do with workers building a bridge.

In Duncan’s story, a strike is in the offing and a group of workers falsely accuse Johnson of betraying their plans to the superintendent. The men decide it is payback time, but Johnson increases his bullying. The men send messages threatening violence, but still the foreman doesn’t back off. When the kid learns about the men’s plans, he immediately tells Johnson, whereupon the malevolent workers chase him. He can only escape by climbing the unfinished bridge and the showdown with Big Red at the top nearly costs both of them their lives. At the last moment, the kid succeeds in warning Johnson about the trouble and the tale closes with a reaffirmation of their friendship and class solidarity. We do not learn what happens to the angry workers or the strike: they simply disappear back into their faceless class.

Nowhere is class difference more starkly realized than in the lives of women, with abundant evidence in the periodical literature for youth. Men of all classes in the era between 1870 to 1914 were expected to be the principal — if not sole — provider for their families. Men of any class, albeit with great effort and a certain amount of luck, could accomplish this, whether by their hands or their heads. Women’s options were more complicated. If a wealthy woman’s husband died, she enjoyed some distinct advantages: she could conduct her own legal affairs and enter into business contracts herself. If she remarried, however, she would lose her property, her capital, and all financial control to her new husband (McLean 133). Unless she was a wealthy woman taught to rule and reign over her little empire as mother and homemaker, she could not meet cultural expectations if widowhood robbed her of her financial support. If a middle-class woman was left as sole provider, it often spelled disaster. According to

Lorna R. McLean, “from this perspective a widow and her family found no place. Relegated to the fringes of society, the single woman as head and sole supporter of a family was an anomaly” (127). Typically, she had few practical skills, since her society had not prepared her to one day become a wage earner.

Even though a working-class woman might not feel the same social pressures against working (and many did expect to work throughout their lives), whether married or single, a life of low wages and penury was a real possibility. Bettina Bradbury states that, among the working class, “the wife was the least likely family member to work for wages.” Her job was to “transform her husband’s wage into what was needed for daily life — food, clothing and shelter. Her work was basic to family survival” (35). The social position of the working-class women in G.M. Waterman’s tale “Mr. Coan’s Lemon-Pie” (1889) is bedrock, inescapable, and necessary — education will not change their destiny and neither will marriage, for the girls are plain and none too quick. In fact, they are stock characters, useful as colourful subjects in periodical fiction for the gentry. Waterman writes their dialogue in the rural dialect of the uneducated Nova Scotian. No doubt authentic, the transcription of the working-class vernacular makes for really difficult reading (a convention apparently not considered problematic for youthful readers in the nineteenth century but considered inimical to those of today). Early in the story, the reader learns that where one lives becomes a class indicator since the tale connects the poor family with life in the country and the wealthy guests of the employer with life in the city. Incidentally, this story is one of the few in *Youth’s Companion* that does not feature a youthful protagonist, thereby supporting the periodical’s attempt to garner wider readership and sales through its masthead designation of content as “family reading.”

Certain patterns of prescribed conduct were intended to reinforce class position while marking women as socially virtuous if they adhered to them. “Mr. Coan’s Lemon-Pie” involves the two plain, grown daughters of elderly parents, the Coans. While the author appears sympathetic to their personalities, the girls are shown as solidly ensconced in appropriate working-class activities. The elder sister, Dorinda, stays home to care for her parents. The younger sister, Deborah, works as a charwoman for the Nortons, a gentry family, in order to earn a living for her parents and her sister. Deborah’s employers send baskets of food and used clothing home to her plebeian family as supplements to the girl’s meagre cash earnings after the manner of the upper classes in the Old World.

The rambling plot includes a seemingly kind promise from the parson’s wife to make a lemon pie for the elderly Mr. Coan. When it arrives, Deborah’s employer forgets the parson’s wife’s offer, ignores the young woman’s protests, and serves the pie to her own tea-time guests from the city. We see a brief scene in which the city guests taste the pie and experi-

ence some sort of distress, yet the mistress of the house remains oblivious to any problem. When the minister's wife learns what happened to her pie, she laughs and, in the penultimate paragraph, exposes another class marker. She exclaims, "Just think . . . of those city ladies eating my poor little pie that wasn't made for a party at all! If I had only known, I would have used the best sugar!" (4). That the relative quality of one's sugar was determined by one's class in the nineteenth century immediately catches our attention, but that is not the most startling aspect of this bit of dialogue. We see ideologies in collision here: the minister's wife, whom we expect to be a model of kindness and generosity because she gives to the poor, is, in fact, a crass respecter of persons, deliberately preparing her gift for the servant family with low-quality ingredients. Apparently, this bit of classist ideology, so startlingly apparent to us, was invisible to readers of 1889.

Another facet of this literature and its historical moment is that women and children were often grouped together as the cheapest labour available. Exploitation could occur because of their need level and their comparative lack of options. Working-class children were expected to work; what little they earned could make the difference in their family's survival. As John Bullen demonstrates, "in most working-class homes, children assumed domestic responsibilities before they reached the age of eight" (166). Home upkeep, whether rural or urban, could involve a myriad of tasks such as child-care for younger siblings, sweeping steps, washing windows, scrubbing floors, gathering coal and wood, fetching water, cultivating gardens, raising and slaughtering animals, selling produce at market, and caring for the sick (166-67). In urban settings, children often performed on the streets for coins, polished shoes, or sold various small items such as newspapers, pencils, shoelaces, or fruit. Some were even forced into prostitution or begging in order to eat (176). Poverty could be just as dire in the city as in the countryside.

E.J. Fraser wrote about the incessant toil of life in the outports in her tale "A Lucky Discovery" (1897). The sons of a drowned fisherman, now the main support of their widowed mother, manage "to keep the wolf from the door" through their lobster-fishing and other maritime scrounging. The narrator describes them with customary middle-class markers as

thrifty lads, accustomed to turning all sorts of ocean produce to account. They gathered and pressed every variety of sea-weed to sell to the tourists who frequently visited the neighbourhood. They searched the rocks for dulse at low tide, they knew where periwinkles could be gathered, and where they could be disposed of at a good figure, and in short they were always on the look-out for some device by which they could wrest an honest penny from the rich treasure-house of the sea. (421)

Fraser published this story at a time when the adventure tale held sway and Canadians were making an international name for themselves as writers of the realistic animal tale. Fraser combines both of these genres through separate scenes. She opens with a sperm whale cavorting in the Arctic Ocean, delighting in the pure physicality of existence. One paragraph later, she launches unabashedly into a didactic, anthropomorphic account replete with illogic: "Students of natural history spoke knowingly of him as a blunt-headed cachalot: but the whale knew himself by no such name. He was only conscious that the sperm and blubber which his great body contained were eagerly sought for by his natural enemies" (420). The whale hides when struck by a harpoon and then floats on the ocean in death.

With no segue, the second scene focuses on the two boys' discovery of the ambergris (a waxy, grey substance secreted by sperm whales and used in the manufacture of perfumes) produced by the deceased whale. The boys automatically translate their find into a chance for class mobility: "It means more comforts for mother, and a chance of education for you and me" (421). Twenty pounds of ambergris valued at \$30 per ounce means specific class change is in the offing: "You shall not do any more hard work, mother dear, and Lem and I are going to have a chance in the world" (421). Fraser gives these boys the vision that education can bring about a change of class that will take them out of a hard-scrabble existence. This resolution exhibits the hallmarks of the author's middle-class affiliation with an ideology that favours literacy and self-improvement. In similar ways, C.F. Fraser's "Sealing from a Lighthouse: A Canadian Adventure" (1897) explains how the sons of a working-class family long for education. Living in isolated circumstances at a lighthouse in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the family needs the income from their sons' labour to avoid hiring another man. The goal of education is impossible until a sudden chance to harvest seals gives them the money for schooling on the mainland the next fall (298-99).

Harvey J. Graff finds that, "to an important degree, labour's views were marked by a tension between a hunger for public schooling and doubts about the value of that form of education" (61), a dichotomy the middle-class authors of these periodicals were naturally disinclined to project. The matter was complicated, for within working-class culture itself the self-made man was valued more highly than the educated man (70). Besides, literacy did not always equate with job success; illiteracy did not guarantee failure, nor did literacy guarantee success. As Graff explains, "Sizeable numbers of illiterate workers achieved middle-class or higher economic ranking. Illiteracy did not consign all men to poverty. Similarly, many literate workers remained poor" (66). Canadians seriously doubted whether or not a liberal arts education was of any use to the working class. Not until the last decade of the nineteenth century did the need for more practical instruction in schools result in curriculum changes. As Paul Axelrod ex-

plains, "Concerns about the appropriate relationship between schooling and work led to other innovations at the turn of the century, including manual training, domestic science, and vocational and technical education" (106-07). It wasn't until 1914 that such courses "had become a regular part of the senior elementary curriculum in most urban communities" (107).

Yet, education as a character-building enterprise can cut both ways. As Graff explains, while the boys learned how to be "loyal, punctual, non-disruptive workers," education also prepared them to be more effective agitators (62). In point of fact, working-class children had to combat class bias throughout the entire school curriculum: "The educational system, from the top down, was biased against the workingman and his children" (64). On the one hand, the workers were given the wrong literature to read (classics and dime novels); on the other, while workers had to pay their share of taxes to support the universities, the expense of actually attending them was too great for them to gain any personal benefit. Graff comments: "The greatest evil of all rested at the pinnacle of the educational system — the university, which all working-men supported by taxation, but whose expense was prohibitive to most" (64).

These tales echo a matter of deep concern to many middle-class social activists and educators in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Education for Canada West at mid-century, warned against the downward social mobility through a lack of education, acknowledging that the social contacts schooling provided factored in more heavily than even literacy skills (Graff 60). Ryerson advocated an alternative education that would be compatible with working-class occupations and not alienate labour, for practical men who could work the farms and factories were needed there. Ryerson was strongly influenced by the religious teachings of the time, for churches in the last decades of the nineteenth century everywhere reflected social consciousness on the part of the middle classes in relation to the unfortunate poor.

Many of the stories in this group of adventure tales teach youth that adherence to Christian principles brings happiness, but this does not seem to be the message of many working-class stories. Instead, the moral seems to be that prosperity produces peace or, conversely that feuds follow poverty. In "Adrift on a Dead Whale: A Sketch of Labrador Life" (1882) by an anonymous author, the teenage boys of two families feud over the accidental killing of a dog, an awkward fact in a village that has only 25 human occupants and 60 dogs. On his way to empty the lobster traps for supper, one young boy finds a dead whale and tries to tow it to shore. Finding it as difficult as towing a ship, he rigs up a sail on the whale itself, all to no avail, for the sharks begin to feed on the whale and the fog comes in. His rival sees his plight and alerts the whole village to the rescue. The result is 60 salmon-barrels of rendered oil plus the whale meat itself — a genuine bonanza for this community. The narrator describes the celebration: "It was,

indeed, a season of jubilee for these poor people" (455). A middle-class religious commentator might say a spirit of brotherly love produced the camaraderie necessary to end the feud; however, a working-class reader knows that satisfying the physical needs of the community fosters cooperation — the abatement of dire want creates latitude for community cohesion. The middle class teaches that the love of money is the root of all evil, but the working class knows that a lack of money creates evil untold. Matters of the spirit are juxtaposed against life-and-death realities to create a poignancy and immediacy often missing from tales based on middle- and upper-class principles, which privilege personal safety and civilized behaviour.

Again, we see the effects of economic necessity operating within the working class in a three-installment story, "Adrift on an Ice-field" (1883), by one-time author Veasie Rowe. Early in the tale, Rowe introduces his readers to a seal-hunting scene with sentiments anticipating those of twentieth-century conservationists. I quote at length here not only because of the currency of the matter in twenty-first-century ecological thinking but also because of the way in which the author's humanitarian feelings are slammed up against necessity in terms of the dollar value of the baby-seal hunt. Off the shores of Newfoundland each year, the story reports,

there begins such a slaughter of seal cubs as would make a tender-hearted person weep! For it is the "bawlers" — the little, white, fat seal babies — which are most sought after. Prettier little creatures, too, — not even excepting human babies, — never draw breath than these young seals, when from three to ten weeks old. Each has a coat of soft white wool, their eyes are as tender as a baby's; even their cries are like those of young children. To hear them out on the ice "pans" with their mothers, one would think he was in the midst of a "baby show." It is one of the hard, cruel things of this hard life of ours, that these innocents should be knocked on the head by the thousand, and have their soft little hides ("skulps") taken off to fill the "bins" of the sealing vessels. But each skulp is worth a dollar; and a single hunter often takes fifty *skulps* in a day. Yet to reap this harvest the sealers incur great perils, and suffer hardships unknown to more southern lands. (380-81)

As the tragedy of the spring hunt unfolds, the story focuses on twenty friends and relatives from the same small outport village, who together are facing a sealing disaster. Terrible accidents decimate the group, and only eleven souls return home. Rowe concludes the episodic tale with a plea to his readers for financial help for the survivors:

But home is home, even though desolate and stricken with disaster. We are trying to repair our losses and build another schooner; and in apology for this poor attempt at authorship, I may as well confess, that it has been in the hope of helping out our scanty stock of money a little, that I have lent

so unaccustomed a hand as that of a fisherman to the task of writing out a narrative of our shipwreck in the ice. (401)

We have here a self-styled, working-class voice writing in the adventure mode. Events are exciting but stark, almost naturalistic, with no romance and little success. It is man battling the elements, with no comforting Christian perspectives voiced.

Untaught youth presented a particular religious dilemma for middle-class Canadian storytellers of the nineteenth century. Annie Howells Frechette doubtlessly believed she was writing a social-gospel tale in "Poor Little Bobby" (1878) and assumed the values of Christian ideology in relation to an orphaned paper "boy" hawking newspapers for a living in a large city. In Frechette's desire to remain true to the reality of the episode, however, her tale exposes Bobby to be a cultural segment of society, a child who has learned street survival but lives outside the values of the dominant middle-class culture.

Essentially a universal tale (in that its setting does not particularize any of a number of large North American cities), the story follows a familiar pattern. A working-class orphan, socially invisible in life, becomes morally significant in death. Frechette explores class differences in expectations for female behaviour (since Bobby is a young girl), employing the bathos of street Arab tales from mid-century England, popularized by Hesba Stretton and her ilk (Bratton 85). Perhaps because Bobby displays highly aggressive methods to earn enough money for survival, the narrator, a professional woman herself, identifies with the unkempt paper girl: "I, too, was a Bobby, — only on a higher scale socially and intellectually" (171). The woman does not speak to the child in their daily encounters, but notes that when they meet on the way to a parade, the child is unusually clean and accompanied by her little sister: "Bobby made free to join our party, and I for one felt deeply honoured for having known her upon working days. I knew how great the condescension was on her part" (171). The inference, here, is that the child disdains people protected by wealth, who live easy, soft lives that require so little of them.

The narrator observes, "I was embolded [sic] to speak, for I now felt that Bobby was human" (171). What is the element that humanizes Bobby in the eyes of the narrator? Bobby's physical proximity? Bobby's nurturing of her little sister? What elements had dehumanized Bobby before? Is it the narrator's distance from Bobby literally, in all senses — physical, emotional, and aesthetic/spiritual? The working class does jobs that make them dirty. Is it the dirt, then, that dehumanizes Bobby? Is her class itself dehumanizing? When a girl plays a boy's part does it dehumanize her? Is a dirty human who does not follow gender proscriptions non-human? Is a non-human an animal? The narrator does not specify any other inhuman aspect of the child, so apparently a dirty working-class child acting outside of a de-

finer gender role is not fully human in the eyes of this educated, middle-class narrator of the nineteenth century.

Ultimately, Bobby dies of the injuries she sustains in saving her sister's life. The child's deathbed scene witnessed by the narrator contains the line, "Evidently death had no terrors for her" (171). Lack of fear is less a reference to the Puritan past in which the dying youth earnestly explains the true nature of faith to the entire family or household (as in the James Janeway model) than a result of later nineteenth-century secularization of religion in which miraculous religious events were not a consideration (Marshall 250). Attending Bobby in the hospital, the narrator of this 1878 story gives a completely secularized explanation that the reason death has no terrors for the child is because "so entirely had her education been neglected, that even the thought of a future life as a sequel to the present gave her no trouble. She had encountered so much that was hard in this world, that the one into which she was about to enter could not make the poor little stoic shrink back afraid" (172). An ancillary interpretation for a reader would appear to be that it is easier to face death when one is uneducated in Christian doctrine than to experience a Christian anxiety for eternal salvation. Of course, nothing could be further from the interests of the publisher of *Youth's Companion*. Certainly no one intended for a reader to conclude that a working-class life inures one to the vagaries of death as a transition, or that religion as taught to and by the middle classes fosters a fear of death. But apparently the secularization of society, plus the class of the protagonist, served to blind editors to the ideology actually being evinced.

In mid-nineteenth-century English Canada, the church dominated all aspects of private life, from spiritual matters to social attitudes to choices of political affiliation. As secularization progressed throughout the century, we see Bobby as a member of a growing group on whom religion has made no impression. The story shows how a young member of the working class is inured against one of the most pervasive backdrops of the period, since the role of churches at the time was to provide an ethical guide, spiritual comfort, moral values, and, where necessary, even social assistance. In the words of Lynne Marks, "religion was important to many . . . workers, but . . . religious involvement among workers cannot in itself be viewed as evidence that workers completely accepted the dominant cultural system, in which Christian belief and practice played such a major role" (157). Frechette's Bobby is an orphan who lives by her wits and, despite the apparent virtue of her spontaneous selfless act, dies impoverished and unenlightened.

The social accommodation of immigrants was necessary in Canadian life throughout the nineteenth century, but authors sometimes found difficulty in knowing what cultural trappings to valorize. For example, matters of deference to penniless gentry from the Old World proved to be a social issue rife with conflict. Marjorie L.G. Pickthall's story "Noblesse Oblige"

suggests a whole mess of class issues underlying the simple tale of how an old French peddler — complete with horse and cart, tin wares, and a young servant boy — survives a deadly forest fire. When it becomes clear the peddler and boy cannot outrun the flames, the peddler ties the little boy's feet under the horse and sends it galloping with all his worldly possessions to a nearby farm for safety, while the Baron faces the fire alone. He discovers water, submerges himself along with the forest creatures, and survives the flames in an act reminiscent of St. Francis of Assisi with the animals.

In a highly melodramatic scene, his horse senses the Baron's arrival at the farmhouse and responds with vigorous kicking. In another, the Baron "saw clearly, too, into that country of dreams inherited from his grandfather, where noblemen in the brightest tan boots and red satin neckties moved gloriously" (439). Apparently inebriated with the romance of her subject, the author claims dreams, the product of the unconscious, to be inheritable. Continuing with this burst of high-flown rhetorical illogic, Pickthall gives his name as Baron Constantin St. Paul d'Annonay of France. In stark juxtaposition, however, she states he is "a little brown man in the dust" (438) with a dull servant boy, whose life is of little consequence: "All days were alike to Constantin, Alphonse, and old 'Toinette'" (438). The local farmers doubt his story of noble origins, but Pickthall valorizes the Baron's class origins because he only sells the best quality of wares, although his stock is sparse. Such lapses into melodrama are uncommon in this body of periodical fiction, however; elsewhere authors paid strict attention to realism, as required for accurately drawn double focalizations of class differences.

Other kinds of immigration in the mid-nineteenth century involved orphans from the slums of England being sent to become farm workers in Canada. After all, the immigration literature proclaimed Canada to be a land of freedom and opportunity where dreams of success and prosperity were all attainable through hard work (Hamelin 444). As historian John Bullen explains, "all members of a farm family, including children, contributed to the successful functioning of the household economy" (163). The more workers, the greater the likelihood of prosperity, especially on a farm where the effort of each person creates economic viability.

Of the many necessary farm skills, bee-keeping was the provenance of a youth determined to turn a profit in the back woods surrounding the family farm. Frank Lillie Pollock alone wrote eleven tales about this kind of bee-keeping, published in *Youth's Companion* between 1904 and 1914. Many other authors writing on the topic found publication as well. While honey bees are not tame, they are domesticated in that their habitat — and to a certain extent even their life cycles — are confined to limits set by people. Sometimes wild animals figure in these stories, such as bears that want honey or a bad-tempered moose that trees the boy beside a hive. But primarily, the stories are rather grim narratives of plucky teenagers acting

on their own without access to adult help or advice, facing the ever-present physical peril of the bees' sting.

In "The Live Car-Load" (1912), Pollock describes in acutely realistic detail the exact effect of multiple bee-stings on a young entrepreneur:

He was beginning to feel poisoned through and through. His heart beat wildly: he was nauseated, and his swollen tongue seemed to fill his mouth. . . . He was in despair for he grew more sick and dizzy every moment, and suffered tortures from the pain of the stings. His knees trembled under him; he was growing desperately weak. His pulse dropped suddenly to an almost imperceptible beat, and he knew that more than money was at stake. If he stayed in that [railway] car three hours, he would be stung to death. (525)

In story after story, personal initiative is always present; despite daunting hazards, young male protagonists inevitably prevail over their vicious charges. Sometimes authors provide a delightful romp with various wild animals; sometimes they pits humans against nature. But the farm boys of these stories have the stuff to prevail: courage, pluck, and ingenuity are the same qualities valorized by the Imperial Boy Hero tales, here transferred to the working class through the double focalization of the narrator's voice coupled with his or her subject.

Double focalization also serves in the one factory tale in this group of stories. By the 1850s, Canada was in the middle of an industrial revolution that by the 1890s changed the way people lead their lives. Factories, mills, and processing plants sprang up and populations moved from rural areas to seek the jobs and capital of larger urban centres. It follows that the decades from 1870 to the beginning of World War I saw very active labour movements in Canada. Surprisingly, there are only elliptical references to factories throughout these tales. The stories that Canadians published in British and U.S. periodicals for young readers provide no sense of the Canadian socioeconomic revolution sparked by the industrial revolution. Of the hundreds of short adventure fiction tales published by and about Canadians, only one mentions the existence of factories — "A Case of Trespass" (1897) by L.M. Montgomery, eventual author of *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and herself a bastion of middle-class respectability.

The family of Montgomery's thirteen-year-old protagonist, Danny, consists of a shiftless father, now dead, a mother who is a "sad-eyed toiler," and an eleven-year-old crippled sister (561). The young hero promises his mother and sister future affluence by selling trout to the hotels around Mosquito Lake. In doing so, he follows the middle-class social expectations of the time for the man of the house (no matter his age) to be the sole wage-earner. When Danny learns from a month-old paper that the fishing pond (owned by the same man who has built a new factory) is off-limits for environmental reasons, Danny decides not to worry his mother and

sister about the problem, for “protecting women from the world was a common concern in the 1880s” (Trofimenkoff 153), a concern that, this story makes clear, spills well into the next decade. Danny’s response reflects middle-class notions that women should stick to domestic roles. Danny has somehow learned that women’s sensibilities should be protected from news of economic disaster, a highly impractical ploy for a working-class family in which women’s responsibilities include carefully budgeting and spending the family’s income in order to ensure survival (Bradbury 27). In actuality, sheltering working-class women from the realities of their physical and economic situations, since they were expected to contribute to both, would spell disaster for both them and their families. Danny clearly demonstrates social allegiances outside of his class.

Montgomery’s story ignores this reality and becomes a homily for truth-telling and “higher” (middle-class) values. Young Danny’s upright behaviour contrasts with that of another boy who poaches knowingly and advises Danny to keep his mouth shut about it. Subsequently, Danny confesses his own unwitting poaching to a factory owner who admires him for both his confession and his demeanour. The owner offers Danny stable employment in the factory at a good wage, catapulting him into a line of advancement that will raise him into the middle class: he is not offered line work but office work. Here, the factory owner takes on the role of a feudal lord in bestowing privilege. The moral of the story seems to be less that honest deeds will be rewarded than that the reward for honesty is social mobility out of the working class. In other words, Montgomery’s story is not really about working-class values or the factory experience. It is about the social values of a middle class that believed one could and should rise in society according to one’s ability, a U.S. notion abundantly satisfied in the Horatio Alger myth that had little, if any, impact on the adventure stories in this Canadian collection.

It is a commonplace to suggest that the scarcity of factory stories about youth in this group of stories may be a result of the great percentage of the population who still resided on farms and in rural areas in the 1870s and 1880s, but as the trend toward more complete industrialization progressed beyond 1900, this answer seems less convincing. One of the chief goals of the short-lived Canadian Labour Union (CLU) that formed in 1873 and collapsed three years later was to censure the employment of children under age ten in factories. Similarly, a decade later, the Knights of Labor (KOL) fought to eliminate factory labour from children under the age of fourteen (Hurl 93). Eric Tucker notes that, under the Ontario Factory Act (passed in 1884 and in force by 1886), it became “unlawful to employ a boy under the age of 12 and a girl under the age of 14” (49). Despite such good intentions by politicians and social activists, however, Susan Campbell Bartoletti’s research shows that,

By 1900, nearly two million children were employed in mills, in mines, in factories, in homes and fields, and on city streets as messengers, bootblacks, newsies, and peddlers. Most of these children were ages seven to sixteen. Some were even younger. Nearly half of all working children were girls. Most factory owners believed that children would simply accept whatever working conditions were given them. (113)

Bartoletti believes that since child-workers in factories were seen as victims by the middle classes both then and now, objective writing to demonstrate the empowerment felt by children who garnered wages has been scarce. Money gave them freedom and independence just as it did adults (112, 114). These ideas reflected reality but were antithetical to all middle-class notions of the right order of things and not considered saleable to the periodicals for youths of the day.

Another contributing reason for the absence of factory tales for youth could relate to the rise of naturalism in fiction. Between 1900 and the outbreak of World War I, adult stories about factory life interested author-proponents of naturalistic writing, but in the United States the reading public initially resisted the works of such writers as Theodore Dreiser, Stephen Crane, and Eugene O'Neill. Their naturalistic psychological dramas were antithetical to the buoyant adventure stories found in popular magazines for adults and for youths. The lack of factory stories could quite simply be the result of the popularity of adventure stories. The Imperial Boy Hero of adventure tales generally requires a noble foe, which, in Canadian terms, includes animals, weather, and obstacles of nature. In these terms, it may be difficult for an author to devise a recognizable adventure in a factory, so often seen as the site of long hours of dehumanizing routine. By comparison, the adventure genre was so dominant that the editors of youth periodicals, determined to stay economically afloat in the highly competitive publishing business, felt obligated to satisfy contemporary taste. The choice before the publishing houses was to either let their subscriptions languish or to stay in business by cranking out formulaic tales about heroic youths hunting animals in the wilds.

As discussed at the beginning of this essay, Nodelman's recent paper explores several aspects of double focalization in Canadian young adult novels. When he applies the concept of double focalization to U.S.-Canadian border issues, his argument becomes particularly appropriate to issues of class. To demonstrate the dramatic parallels, I will insert class terminology into one sentence of his discussion:

Sharing most aspects of a common culture and economy, and yet on the other side of a [class] border which, while undefended, is nevertheless a border, [the working class is] in the position of being separate in a significant way from that which they are in fact connected to and a part of — and

thus they tend often to focus on that paradoxical state as a key to their [class] distinctness. (11)

Understanding the paradox of two class voices weaving around one another is central to recognizing the double focalization present in this collection.

At several points in his essay, Nodelman approaches a discussion of the result of the double focalization that may be helpful here. He suggests that the two voices keep readers at a distance and prevent them from identifying completely with either voice, thus promoting objectivity; the fact that readers thus often have greater knowledge than the characters can intensify the experience of the narrative voices and events (66, 71). Nodelman pursues the cultural implications of this narrative technique: "The prevalence of double-focalized narrations in Canadian fiction for children might then represent a reading position significantly Canadian in its positioning of readers as observers of a life more complex and exciting than their own and that involves people they feel empathy with but are nevertheless separate from" (68). Since these Canadian working-class tales were exported for publication in youth magazines in England and in the U.S., perhaps the young readers saw the class-markers as similar to and part of the exoticism they identified with and responded to in the ever-popular wild-animal tales, a large component of the adventure tale genre.

I wish I could say that the clarity of dual-class vision embedded in each of these stories speaks to the excellence of their middle-class authors, but that would be a most difficult argument to defend. In many respects, these tales succeed in reflecting working-class values despite the limitations of their authors; however, in examining these tales over a number of years, I am developing favourites and I believe that many of the stories have literary merit some critics deny them. It would be foolish to ignore their demonstrable success as adventure, a genre excluded early on from attempts at canon formation, yet a genre that ruled the day as to popularity.

While co-option may have been the intent of the middle-class authors and publishers, the stories foregrounding working-class protagonists show a genuine resistance to this class-biased agenda. Co-option of the working class by the upper classes was not routine and did not constitute a practical way to live side-by-side, as some would argue. That the authors were sensitive enough to hear the voice of the "other" and to carry it within the tales themselves speaks to the honesty of the fictional representations of the nineteenth-century working-class child in this group of stories. Many of these nineteenth-century Canadian working-class adventure tales deserve place in a canon of voices that are true and honest to their class origins.

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