

# *Traditional Fantasy and the Nineteenth-Century Canadian Short Adventure Tale: Working-Class Tales for Youth in Nineteenth-Century Canada*

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*Résumé* : Cette dissertation est la troisième 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 aux Etats-Unis et en Grande Bretagne entre les années 1870 et 1914. Pendant que les histoires plus développées de cette collection prennent leur place à côté des histoires courtes parvenant du monde entier, les contes plus simples démontrent des qualités pré-littéraires trouvées dans toute littérature folklorique. Les médias de la presse ont simplement gardé les variantes pendant une période où la tradition orale était inopérable au Canada dû à la proximité et à l'augmentation du savoir lire. L'étude suivante cherche à examiner ces variantes contre les modèles de contes folkloriques quant à la scène, la caractérisation, l'action et le thème, et en contexte avec les catégories de littérature folklorique telles que les fables, les contes et les contes de fée.

*Summary*: This essay, the third 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 the more fully-developed stories in this group rightly take their place alongside short stories the world over, the simpler tales demonstrate pre-literate qualities found in all folk literature. Print media simply saved the variants at a time when the oral tradition was inoperable in Canada due to proximity and increased literacy. The following study examines these variants against folktale patterns in terms of setting, characterization, plot, theme, and in context with well-known categories of folk literature such as fables, noodlehead tales, tall tales, and fairy tales.

In two previously published essays in *Canadian Children's Literature*, I have used several different lenses for analyzing a collection of nineteenth-century Canadian short adventure fiction originally published in several U.S. and British periodicals for youth between 1870 and 1914, as outlined in R.G. Moyles's index of such materials, appearing in a 1995 issue of *Canadian Children's Literature*. The first essay, published in 2002, demonstrates how this genre, once the exclusive domain of the aristocratic classes, has been used to construct tales about working-class youths. A particular medieval prose romance is cited as a model for the adventure tale, as knightly adventurers brave combat with the heathen foe and face the forces of elemental Nature to conquer and return with honour. Paradoxically, the tales found in this collection of nineteenth-century periodicals frequently foreground working-class heroes amid many of the same perils, despite the essential rigidity of class structure that allowed for very little mobility throughout Canadian social structures.

In the second essay, "Child Heroes of the Working Class" (also included in this issue), I show that although 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. This collection provides 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 that makes a reconsideration of class perceptions and allegiances essential.

As I begin the third and final installment to this three-part study, the matter of quality is always on my mind. Are these old adventure tales very good stuff, anyway? In evaluating literature for children, we have to use the same tools as for adult literature, of course. We look for conflicting elements in a character that create depth because we want to see characters change and grow as they encounter events in the plot. As critics, we excoriate stereotypical characters and rudimentary plots. We enjoy intertextual referencing, metaphorical juxtaposition, and symbolic connections to broader meanings. Some tales in this collection meet these standards, but most do not. What, then, do we do with this mass of third-rate fiction? Should we apologize to our posterity that the nineteenth century didn't have much of value to give us? Should we relegate it all to the social historians and ignore it as literature?

This essay investigates how the simplest of the tales in this collection, those that are most easy to dismiss as being sub-literate, in fact have pre-literate qualities. I argue that they are folktales in adventure-tale clothing. The term "traditional fantasy" identifies tales that form the oral tradition of Western culture no matter their apparent origin. Oral tales have no provable origin or teller and are associated with communal hearth-side gather-

ings involving a mixed audience by both age group and gender. They frequently involve elements of magic and fantasy such as talking animals, an archetypal structure, simple plots, basic thematic issues, plus the various other peculiarities of traditional fantasy, all of which are common to every textbook on children's literature. For this reason, my essay will depart in format from other scholarly papers by not heavily referencing other critics. The children's literature text I use as my basis is the most recent version of *Children's Literature, Briefly* by James S. Jacobs and Michael O. Tunnell (2004), but I could have used one of several others with equal results. My aim is to demonstrate that many of the nineteenth-century Canadian adventure tales parallel time-honoured patterns found in traditional fantasy.

These less-developed tales follow folktale patterns in setting, characterization, plot, and themes, with many of the categories of traditional stories represented. Folktale patterns predominate, but those of tall tales, fables, and legends all appear. Epics and ballads are not compatible with short fiction form, the first being very long and both requiring versification. Myths and religious stories are not present to any significant degree. Folktales are often thought of in overlapping categories such as cumulative tales, pourquoi tales, beast tales, noodlehead or numbskull tales, trickster tales, realistic tales, and fairy tales. Many but not all of these kinds of stories can be found in the nineteenth-century Canadian adventure tale collection I will explore. For variety's sake, I use the terms "folktale" and "traditional fantasy" interchangeably in this essay, with no intended degradation of meaning.

Since folktales seem to have been told to a multi-aged audience of males and females gathered around a communal fire in the evenings, they contain the wisdom and life lessons deemed culturally valuable. Many of the short adventure fiction tales retain the image of a fireside oral telling as part of the story frame, a device common in the period to heighten the veracity of the storyteller, since realism was in vogue. Although a storyteller may start by positioning the locale — naming a stream, lake, mountain, town, etc. — he will typically then move into a close-up shot of men and boys around a campfire. (I use the male pronoun advisedly, since the authors were, with rare exceptions, male.) This combination of realism and folktale seems to satisfy both a yearning to connect with oral roots and to satisfy the obligations the author has toward the realism demanded by the editors of these periodicals.

In discussing matters of structure, the following examples demonstrate typical frames for the tales. C.H. Lugrin writes in "In a Sledge Adventure" (1894): "It was the turn of the oldest member of our party to tell a story, and this is what he told, as he poked the camp-fire with the long poker-stick, and seemed to see in the coals the scenes he described" (106). Edmund Collins writes in "An Adventure Among Wild Dogs" (1888): "'Tell us, Roberts,' I said, as we lay around our camp-fire in the heart of Muskoka,

'about your escape from the wild dogs on the Newfoundland coast'" (537). Charles G.D. Roberts writes in "The Panther at the Parsonage" (1889): "The speakers were lying about the campfire at the foot of the 'Big Squatook' Lake, in Ontario. There were four of us in the party, and we were in the genial mood which comes after a good day's sport and a savory supper. The night was still, and we were waiting for a story to go to sleep by" (524). Variants of this frame abound: sometimes it is a particular festive fire such as at Christmas, sometimes it is memories of times past before one's own hearth, sometimes it is friends around a table in a kitchen or a pub, and frequently it is a group of men in the smoking car of a passenger train telling tales — in short, any place that people can congregate with a bit of comfort and seclusion is the place for storytelling.

Sometimes authors even use double frames, as Norman Duncan does in "Astray in the Night" (1902). The narrator opens wide-angle on the setting:

In order to reach lake Kamichou, where Ellerton had his adventure, you take train at Quebec for the back country, and when you have been jolted over two hundred miles or more of that rickety road, you are put off in a wilderness of pine and tangled underbrush — in the dusk a forsaken, ghostly place — fearfully silent when the train has puffed out of hearing. Thence you go by canoe down a tortuous, fussy little stream — dodging boulders, picking the way through noisy rapids, paddling laboriously through long stretches of slow, back water — until you sweep out into the head waters of the Kamichou. In the twilight you make the lower end of the lake, where you find hard ground and a clear space to pitch your camp. (105).

Next comes the fish story, with a shift to the new narrator, Ellerton: "It was my first summer on the Kamichou, when I was in happy ignorance of how dense a real Kamichou fog may be. I was here with Jack Black, of our company, who had made this his fishing-ground for years. I was his guest, in fact, and therefore bound in politeness to follow where he led" (105). The tales generally do not close by backing out of the frames; when the action ends, the story ends.

Folktale settings are established quickly and occur in the distant past. Curiously, many of the adventure tales, whether the geographical location is specified or not, give the impression that the events occur in the vastness of uninhabited space and involve a primordial engagement with the forces of nature. The stark settings for these tales seem to float in the distances of time as much as to begin with "once upon a time," as in the anonymous story "Told by Torchlight: A Backwood Story in Two Chapters" (1881):

Evening in a remote part of Canada. The hand of winter is upon everything with a grip such as we know little of in this country [England]. The

air is clear and keen, the moon is bright, the stars sparkle with a frosty brilliancy as they peer down into the still depths of a small lake surfaced with ice clear as crystal, hard as rock, and strong enough to bear the tramp of a regiment of soldiers; for the thermometer has for some time past stood considerably below zero. Silence is over everything — silence deep and solemn. Not a breath of air stirs a leaf. Sable-headed pines tower aloft into the cold splendour of the moonlight, all still as death, while dense shadows slumber around them. (386)

Settings that establish immensity can apply to assorted weather conditions, whether the characters are caught in storms, watching the tides coming in, or sealing on ice floes.

In “The Schooner and the Iceberg” (1903), Duncan writes about a schooner’s collision with an iceberg (that hoists her into a kind of inside-passage aboard the iceberg) and her inexorable passage through:

[The schooner] was swept on, swinging from side to side, striking her bow here and her stern there; and with every shock fragments of rotten ice fell in a shower from above. How soon one might strike one of their number down, no man knew. How soon some great mass, now poised in the mist, might be dislodged and crush the schooner in its fall, no man knew. How soon the towering cliffs might swing together and grind the ship to splinters, no man could tell. Were these masses of ice connected deep down under water? Or were they floating free? There were no answers to these questions. (37-38)

The elements are enormous, irascible forces unmitigated by civilization. Little outpost villages, unchanged by the modern world, may sustain life, but little sense of resistance to the elements broods in them.

Characterization in traditional fantasy differs from modern construction techniques in the involvement of flat characters. Modern readers may have difficulty accepting the largely undeveloped characters in this group of adventure tales. While certain tales include characters who speak their feelings and thoughts, most stories centre on characters who are essentially archetypal, symbolic of basic human traits such as good or evil. In both instances, the range of the character’s emotions tends to be limited to the most basic: jealousy, anger, love, fear, greed, etc. Even when character development is present, generally it has to do with the protagonist learning a basic life lesson that is spelled out much like the moral addendum at the end of a fable. Usually, the characters do not change or grow very much during the course of these simple stories.

Characters such as ogres, monsters, and giants abound in traditional fantasy. In nineteenth-century Canadian adventure fiction, certain elements of the landscape become metaphorically equivalent to this kind of malevolent, uncontrollable power. For example, an iceberg is heartless, cold, and

unresponsive to human need; the same is true for a mountain, a blizzard, a raging river, the spring thaw, or ravenous animals. While certain denizens of the forest receive respect and are written of as admired foes — cougars, bears, and moose are generally in this category — wolves are not and are always instead depicted as ferocious ogres. Consider the monstrous creation in Rev. W.H. Withrow's story "An Adventure with Wolves" (1881):

Lawrence could feel his hot breath on his naked hand. The fiendish glare of those eyes he never in all his life forgot. It haunted him for years in midnight slumbers, from which he awoke trembling, and bathed in the cold perspiration of terror. He could easily have believed the weird stories of lycanthropy, in which Satanic agency was feigned to have changed men for their crimes into were-wolves — ravenous creatures, who added human or fiendish passion and malignancy of hate to the bestial appetite for human flesh. If ever there was murder in a glance, it was in that of those demon-eyes that glared into those of Lawrence, and which seemed actually to blaze, with a baleful, greenish light — a flame of inextinguishable rage. (171)

We see in this passage elements of the horror story — those very same elements that are carried in the brief horrific tales of traditional folk literature such as the witch in "Hansel and Gretel" or the ogre in "Hop o' my Thumb."

Giants — or "huge man" characters — figure rather frequently in these adventure tales. In traditional fantasy, giants represent the powerful force in the land — a lord or nobleman who deprives the peasants of their earnings, their work, or their family members. In many ways, the huge, implacable man in the nineteenth-century Canadian stories is the same kind of force as unfeeling nature. Batten's protagonist in "Old Kiatsee" describes the villain, Wilson, in an early scene as "a veritable giant of a man, who could have crushed the young ranch-owner at a blow" (1068). The young British-born rancher accuses him of running a horse to death and being so heartless as to not put it out of its misery with a well-aimed bullet. A later reference escalates the jeopardy: "Wilson was a huge brute of a man, who had been known to best three or four of his fellow-creatures at a time" (1069). The story ends with the tragic death of Wilson's Indian accuser, whereupon "Wilson turned to join his comrades, but they had ridden on — not one had waited for him! Penniless, broken in health — no longer a despot among his fellow beings, he knew now that his friends of yesterday had deserted him" (1074). Wilson's downfall here is nearly complete, which follows in the folktale pattern. Consider the various "Jack and the Beanstalk" or "Jack and the Giant" tales, for example, when examining the requisite death-of-the-giant endings.

Another "huge, sour-tempered fellow" in a tale by Thomson, "Harry's Revenge" (1891), takes umbrage against the young, popular protagonist.

This giant, "possessed as it would appear by some evil spirit or smouldering hatred of the boy because of his popularity and good looks, sat apart, gloomy and silent" (140). It all comes to a big punching match between the giant, Silas Gosling, and the protagonist's champion, "who planted his fist between the burly giant's eyes and sent him whirling, heels over head, to the ground. . . . The big fellow's head and hide, however, were about as thick as those of a rhinoceros." In the victory of the weak over the strong we can see echoes of the David and Goliath story; however, the ending of this tale is different from either the Old Testament story or H. Mortimer Batten's unrepentant villain above. When the protagonist saves Gosling's life in Thomson's tale, Gosling becomes a repentant man. R. Gordon Kelly's well-known study of U.S. periodical literature for youth, *Mother Was a Lady: Self and Society in Selected American Children's Periodicals, 1865-1890* (1974), identifies this pattern as the Change of Heart, in which the protagonist undergoes a moral enlightenment or some other dramatic shift in understanding in which there is a conscious decision to make change for the better. The repentant villain theme reflects Christian tales that for centuries were told by the clergy to congregations of illiterate commoners until these tales began to work in the same manner as other kinds of folktales. The audience was mixed in age and gender, and the scripture stories *cum* folktales formed entertainment as well as life lessons for the hearers.

As we have seen, some of these huge men are malevolent and self-serving, enacting the role of the evil, powerful Lord of the castle like the folktale giants. Others, like Old Testament Samson, are essentially good men who can be deceived, but in the end bring about justice. W.M. Elkington's "The Soul of a Coward: A Story of the Canadian Backwoods" (1907-1908) is an example of the latter. The huge man, Kelly, works in a lumber camp, is jealous of the foreman, and plans to kill the foreman's younger brother for spite. The plot backfires, and when the tree he fells in order to kill the lad crushes his own leg instead (186), he has a change of heart in which his hatred turns to loyalty. He says of his lameness that "he lost his leg at the same time that he found his soul" (187). Thematically, this is a Samson-like loss-of-strength story, but with class differences, since Samson was a Hebrew prophet and Kelly an Irish ruffian.

In Thomson's tale "In Skeleton Pool" (1891), "the gigantic foreman, Tom Benson" (118) saves the life of an alcoholic who has binged, by felling a 70-foot white pine over the whirlpool where the man is trapped and effecting a seemingly impossible rescue. We see here another folktale element, in which the hero must overcome a task with insurmountable odds, an accurate description of the rescue Tom Benson carries out. Another of Thomson's stories, "A Bitter Experience" (1896), contains an intensely difficult task accomplished by the heroic Scots surveyor, "Dugald Stewart, a giant nearly forty years old, 'game' in every inch, and proud" (132). This huge-man hero breaks trail on snowshoes through heavy wet snow at the cost of his

health and for the benefit of his friends and employer. As we see, variations in the "huge man" motif occur: The giants in these stories can come as solid villains or repentant villains and even as heroes.

As in folktales, the hero of the nineteenth-century adventure tale is sometimes not an apparent candidate for success. In "Brin" (1911), Wilfred T. Grenfell, a physician to the Newfoundlanders, writes about being summoned to a disease-stricken village 60 or 70 miles cross-country and taking a shorter but less-marked route. In the absence of his good team of dogs, Grenfell is forced to use the second string, which includes "a yellowish brown dog with queer black-striped markings somewhat like a Bengal tiger. These lent to his sinister face the suggestion that he was eternally grinning — an impression intensified by an odd way he had of turning up the corners of his mouth when he caught one's eye" (101). This is not the customary description of a heroic lead dog, but hero he is when he guides the men along a scarcely marked trail in the dead of winter to a safe arrival at the distressed village. An equally unlikely hero is found in John Allen Hornsby's "Only a Little Malamoot Dog" (1907). As the smallest of the sled dogs, Nellie must be killed in order to feed the miners and the rest of the dogs. She saves her own life and those of the entire company when she catches whitefish in the air-holes of a lake, providing food other than her own body to sustain the company (485).

Thematic development tends to be rudimentary in folktales and much of the adventure literature alike. Themes most favoured are the power of love and rewards for virtues such as courage, mercy, kindness, perseverance, overcoming jealousy and fear, and the punishment of evil. An argument can be made that simple themes are characteristic of all short fiction since no short text can support a complicated theme. This collection of stories would confirm such a view. Let us begin with love, a ubiquitous theme. Frequently, the tales foreground the relationships of young males, as in the devotion of an older brother for a younger. Frank Lillie Pollock's "Indian Slough" (1912) relates how two brothers try to escape a forest fire by crossing a swamp on snowshoes, the elder carrying eight-year-old Charlie on his back, in order to arrive lakeside where a steamer will be passing. "The bitterest thought was that Charlie had been left in his charge. If he could have made a bridge to safety with his own body for the child he would have done it" (537).

Courage is a dominant theme in both folk material and the short adventure fiction. Edward Huntington opens "The Pride of the Camp" (1910-1911) with anecdotes about the various kinds of courage and strength displayed by the trappers at the Hudson Bay Company's post. Finally, he focuses on the "huge man" of the story who becomes a braggart as he wrestles and wins against the men in the nearby lumber camps. It is up to Father Foley, the priest, to import a trained professional to beat Jean and send him back to trapping, where he "is as good a trapper to-day as ever his



father was before him" (460).

The relationship between courage and fear exists as elementally in these stories as the relationship between good and evil itself. Sometimes fear needs to be cured, like smallpox or pneumonia. Duncan opens "The Cure of Fear" (1907) with how necessary courage is to plebeian survival: "It takes courage and a will for work to sweeten the hard life of those parts, which otherwise would be filled with dread and an intolerable weariness" (421). Young Donald has a brush with death by sea at age eight and grows fearful: "But he was not a coward. On the contrary, although he was circumspect in all his dealings with the sea, he never failed in his duty" (421). His parents respect his problem, and the tale gives various instances throughout his young life when Donald's actions prove his will to overcome his fear. After succeeding in the climactic event, the tale concludes: "So Donald North learned that perils feared are much more terrible than perils faced. He has a courage of the finest kind, in these days, has young Donald" (422).

Wherever we can expect fear, we find courage abounding. Thomson's prize-winning first story for *Youth's Companion*, "Petherick's Peril" (1885), opens with the narrator blithely collecting bird's eggs from ledges above the sea. When a ledge gives way, it leaves him with barely a foothold to make the return trip. The rest of the story chronicles the gradations and responses fear produces in him:

The fissure was widening under my eyes, the rock before me seemed sinking outward, and with a shudder and a groan and roar, the whole long platform fell crashing to the sea below! I stood on a margin of rock scarce a foot wide, at my back a perpendicular cliff, and five hundred feet below the ocean, now almost hidden by the vast concourse of wheeling and affrighted birds. (10)

Finally, the protagonist catches the free-hanging rope blown by the drafts and slides himself through the loop on the end up to his armpits. "Then I lost consciousness," an admission of overwhelming fear, generated to a level that was incurable in later life. "[W]hen I got strong [I] found that I had left my nerve on that awful cliff-side. Never since have I been able to look from a height or see any other human being on one without shuddering" (10). Like the inevitable dichotomy of villain and hero, in these tales initial fear automatically leads to eventual courage.

Sometimes the emotional response of fear becomes as huge as the forces of nature, equivalent to an actual character in the tale. Duncan's "A Bearer of Tidings" (1905) contains the marvellous opening line: "When I was a lad hardship and sudden peril were not unknown to me, for I was wilderness-born and wilderness-bred" (333). Since the plot consists entirely of the trek of two best friends to a settlement to fetch the doctor, the terrain is the difficulty, the evil character to be overcome. That the boys do so with val-

our is unquestionable. Similarly, the sixteen-year-old protagonist in Pollock's "Between Wind and Water" (1910) saves the day because of his courage. This plucky lad uses the wind and his iceboat to notify his father to open the floodgates of the dam below when he sees an accidental dynamite explosion destroy the upper dam. Because of his skill, many lives and much property is saved. And so the stories go: tale after tale of the courage of young men who succeed amid peril.

Folktales are told in a lean prose style, as are the adventure tales. Length limitations of the periodicals mitigate for this spare style and it is also a quality of the short story genre itself. Consider how efficiently Roberts creates a plot hook, setting, and mood:

It was one night in camp at the head of the Big Chiputneticook that I heard how those scars were achieved. Tent was pitched on a bit of dry intervale which fringed the base of a high rock, a well-known landmark to trappers, and distinguished by the name of "The Devil's Pulpit." The rock towered over us, naked and perpendicular, for a distance of two hundred feet, then shelved, and rose again some hundreds of feet further to a butting cap of mingled rock and forest. ("Dan" 501)

Probably the greatest loquacity in description is reserved when the setting — the landscape or the weather — becomes equivalent to a character. The river in Thomson's "Pickering's Pool" (1891) becomes an active personality in the plot: "The river pours on as if it had a duty to reach the end, as if angry to be obstructed, and as if striving against barriers with a fierce determination to push through or gather force to sweep the very earth away" (97). Obviously, "duty," "anger," "striving," and "determination" are not qualities inanimate nature can logically share with humans. With action as the featured element of the tales, florid description and sentimentality, with their attendant verbiage, rarely surface. Thomson prevents such excess by his use of active verbs. He animates a descriptive prose passage, comprising two sentences, simply through dint of verb choice: leap, hurries, sweeps, broadens, broods, yearns, paddled, hears, watches, and pours (from paragraphs one and four). All in all, this makes for compelling reading before Thomson even begins his story of heroism.

Similarly, plot development in short fiction is not elaborate. The plots of adventure tales and folktales consist of a success story in which the underdog makes good, the youngest son comes out on top, the unwanted child becomes the feted child, and the protagonists and their families survive. Acknowledging these idiosyncrasies, the plots of the nineteenth-century Canadian adventure fiction are particularly simple and direct, even formulaic. A plucky young man sets out. He meets a challenge of some sort: an accident occurs, the weather turns violent, or the intended prey is more formidable than expected. A contest for supremacy or survival ensues in which the hardy young protagonist is saved by his own skills, good

luck, remembered information, and occasionally by concerned family or friends. With few exceptions, the boy succeeds. The same plots occur whether the boys are sealing on an ice floe, bee-keeping in the backwoods, hunting or fishing in the forests, working in the mines, cow-punching amidst Indians in the west, and even if the stories involve only animals taking the roles of both protagonist and antagonist.

An example of plot brevity is Irene W. Hartt's concise narrative of "A Fight with a Devil-Fish" (1896), an octopus repeatedly characterized here as a "monster" (159). After the ubiquitous frame in which two young boys question an adult diver on a beach, we hear the story of man-versus-octopus in a coastal British Columbia setting. A very large octopus prevents two divers from repairing the pipes on the bottom of the channel, whereupon the men attack it from opposite sides with crowbars eight feet long and a sledge hammer. The men eventually succeed in crushing it and bring the creature (still alive) up to the boat to prove both its size and their prowess. I find the story as fresh and vigorous today as it was over a hundred years ago, and attribute this quality to the folk elements in its composition that do not date. Compare this tale with the column next to it, "Something to Smile At" (160), that tells eight jokes, all of which depend on a particular ideological construct in the reader. Not one of the jokes is apt or funny today.

The international contribution to literature by Canadian authors in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly the realistic animal tale. At first blush, the collection of nineteenth-century adventure tales I am examining seems to be a veritable compendium of the realistic animal tale, for it contains every possible forest animal theoretically acting according to instinct and training. With a closer look, though, most are more similar to the beast tales of folklore than they are to the realistic animal tale. The two kinds of stories differ in that realism avowedly eschews any degree of anthropomorphism, while the animals in the beast tales overtly represent human foibles. When authors want to make the tale gentle for very young readers or funny for the whole family, anthropomorphism is the way to do it. Consider one of the most famous authors of the realistic animal tale, Roberts, who published *Babes of the Wild* in book form in 1912 and serialized these tales in *St. Nicholas* in 1912 and 1913. In them, Uncle Andy relates stories to The Boy/The Babe during several walks in the woods about various forest animals: a bear cub, a young woodchuck, and a family of otters. Each tale contains some close observation of actual animal behaviour combined with just enough anthropomorphism for the reader to make an emotional identification with the animal. In the concluding tale, a bear mother and a human mother go after their young, coincidentally coming together adrift on a raft. Justice is served when the neighbour in a canoe rules in favour of the bears, refusing to allow the human mother and child to have the bear cub as a pet. He says, "mothers has [sic] rights" (490), which places humans

and animals on a corresponding level of ethical rights.

Another tale by Roberts demonstrates how even the man internationally recognised for his skill in the genre cannot eliminate human qualities from the animals he writes about. In "The Raft Rivals" (1890), the psychologically complicated Newfoundland dog feels jealousy toward his owner's young daughter, who usurps the dog's place in its master's affections. "Jake [the dog] had caught the irritation in the boss's tone, and had vaguely comprehended it. Upon the boss his resentment was tending to concentrate itself. He could harbor no real ill-feeling toward the child, but on Luke Theriault he seemed to lay the whole blame for his dethronement" (262). The dog is apparently able to distinguish between the innocence of the child that deserves no censure and the complicity inherent in adult behaviour. Hence, the dog focuses his rage on the adult, ignoring instinct that would calculate the man to be at least twice the size of the child. Then, when the child falls overboard and the admired instincts of this breed of water dog kick in, he saves the child from drowning in the river.

Conversely, in another tale, "From Buck to Bear and Back" (1905), Roberts writes about the male protagonist in animal terms. The author notes the "primitive soul" of Sam Coxens, who becomes angry at the buck destroying his cabbage patch — enough so that the "long dormant instinct of the hunter began to awake in Sam Coxens . . . [his] primal instincts spring to life" and he stalks the buck (89). The bear and the buck are anthropomorphized to the extent that they equal the primitive responses in the man. The man is said to be impotent because he is not an effective woodsman and the bear is also said to be impotent because he is old, but the buck is in his prime and "went capering off frivolously down the woody aisles" (89). It's an amusing tale primarily because the parallel motives driving both man and animal cross over species. Critic and poet Randall Jarrell puts it this way: "Stories, because of their nature or — it is to say the same thing — of ours, are always capable of generalization: a story about a dog Kashtanka is true for all values of dogs and men" (7).

Consider the inherent anthropomorphism in the following tales. The sled dog in Batten's "On the Winter's Trail" (1913) executes justice on the villain without prompting by its owner, the act carrying out the reader's own desires (211). The bear in John Mackie's "Between Avalanche and Bear" (1910-1911) has human thoughts: "He glared up at me uneasily and suspiciously, then trotted off down the valley as if at last I had revealed a really desperate side to my character" (131). The entire first section of Fraser's "A Lucky Discovery" (1897) is written from the whale's perspective: "Students of natural history spoke knowingly of him as a blunt-headed cachalot; but the whale knew himself by no such name" (420). The English sparrow in J. Macdonald Oxley's "Fluffy, A Waif from the Streets" (1890) "could reason as well as love" (838), qualities frequently found in short supply even among humans. Chang (the elephant) in Arthur E. McFarlane's "Chang, 'Bally-

hoo' and 'Ballyhoo's' Waistcoat" (1908) can also reason: "Chang understood all that; and it seemed to him that he had never seen Ballyhoo [the owner] show himself so perseveringly unreasonable before. But since the responsibility for their well-being had now been placed upon his shoulders alone, he acted accordingly" (134). I could continue with a plethora of examples, all to show that in these adventure tales, whether humans stand in for animals or animals stand in for humans, the objectives are similar to the Beast Tales: Animals connect man to his true nature; conversely, man connects animals to their true nature.

Beast tales move into the realm of the fable when the moral becomes more important than the plot. Isabella Valancy Crawford's fable "The Good-Natured Bear" (1876-1877) is one of the few tales to employ the stock fantasy character of an elf. The author starts realistically with a mother and daughter walking in the woods, but when the child expresses alarm at the sight of a hunch-backed man, Greenjacket the elf vows to a doe that he will teach the child the truth about the human heart. When Nona becomes lost in the woods, she finds a cave in which all sorts of ugly but nice creatures abide. Bruin's advice is to "remember that an ugly creature may have as kind a heart, and be as worthy of regard, as a handsome one" (135). Compare that moral tag with those of Aesop. *The Aesop for Children* by Milo Winter (1919) carries the tale "The Cat, The Cock, and the Young Mouse," in which a very young mouse is terrified at the ugly sight and piercing sound of a cock, which cannot hurt him, but is drawn to the gentle looks and engaging manner of a cat, which can eat him. The mother mouse's advice is "as long as you live, never judge people by their looks," and the attached moral states, "*Do not trust alone to outward appearances*" (59). Crawford's story is very much in the fable pattern.

Another fable in the adventure tale collection, Thomson's "Two Boys' Ways" (1893), is really a tortoise-and-the-hare story with human stand-ins. Two boys are very different students: the plodder becomes a successful lawyer; the brilliant one ruins his father's business and knocks around the world's capital cities developing no real skills. Penniless, he returns home to request employment with the plodding friend, who welcomes him warmly and effects his moral and professional rescue (668).

Noodlehead tales, another folktale category, involve a not-too-bright character making what appears to be a series of foolish mistakes, yet providentially often coming out on top. Ethelwyn Wetherald's protagonist in "Clarissa's Speculations" (1897) loses more and more of her hard-earned cash on a series of foolish, speculative investments advertised in cheap papers. Compare this tale with the earlier German prototype, "Hans in Luck," collected by the Grimm Brothers. Hans totes home a bag of gold which he trades for ever less-valuable items: a horse, a cow, a pig, a goose, and finally a grind-stone. Hans ends the tale by claiming that "I am the luckiest man under the sun," (19) which often baffles modern readers. A

plebeian audience, however, fully understands that the reason for Hans's joy lies in his having the means to independently earn his own living in the community. The bag of gold was an encumbrance because it was inconsistent with Hans's class position. The tale ends with a reverse chronology plot review, the moral never being stated explicitly. The Canadian tale ends as Clarissa grows out of her folly and learns the Protestant work ethic as a life lesson. She understands, now, that she will only come out ahead by dint of hard work and common sense rather than speculation. "I've had enough of speculating. . . . Now I'm all for earning, and your job just suits me" (362). I point out the differences between the tales as cultural, but the similarities are overwhelmingly a matter of folktale patterning.

Despite the insistence on realism in the stories contained in the seven British and American periodicals indexed, tall tale elements do surface now and then. I would make the argument that much of the devilish behaviour attributed to Canadian grey wolves comes in this category. For those of us who inherited the research of the twentieth-century naturalists such as Farley Mowat in *Never Cry Wolf* (1963) and Barry Lopez in *Of Wolves and Men* (1978), the nineteenth-century short adventure tale depiction of wolves strains credulity. Courtenay Hayes writes in "The King Wolf" (1913-1914):

A huge and terrible mask had blocked out half the moonlight, and a pair of phosphorescent eyes blazed balefully in his direction. The hut was filled with a carrion reek, as the wolf's breath rose steaming in the frosty air. . . . With a savage snarl, he launched his great bulk at the opening; his two great forelegs, followed by that appalling head, were thrust into the hut, and the whole erection rocked as his hind feet scattered and tore at the frozen snow in their endeavours to thrust his body through also. (238)

I would also argue that the tendency by British authors toward armchair adventure enhances the likelihood of tall tale. John Mackie writes similarly about wolves in "The Leader of the Pack" (1912):

They were lank and famished-looking brutes — evil-eyed and furtive. They lifted their wolfish snouts, and gazed open-mouthed at the mail-carrier. . . . There was a sharp ping, and next moment the gray wolf pitched forward, kicking with a bullet in its shoulder. No sooner had it touched the snow than the two other brutes had sprung upon it, and were worrying it to death. Their sudden access of ferocity, their cold-blooded and pitiless malignity jarred horribly on Gray, accustomed as he had been to the primitive and excitable types of the frontier. That was how these animals served one another the moment they were no longer able to stand up for themselves. . . . They lifted their ghastly, dripping snouts, and snarled. (506-07)

Can these be the same creatures Mowat and Lopez describe?

Continuing in the tall tale category, Collins writes about being lost in a

Manitoba oat field "spread out beyond the range of sight, . . . now slightly tinged with gray in the grain. The prairie soil being so rich, the crop was very heavy, each stalk standing sturdy as a fishing-rod, and not less than seven feet high. None of it was 'lodged,' or thrown down, but it stood as upright as a great grove of straight saplings" ("Lost in an Oat Field" 114). The narrator stumbles upon his horse that had thrown him the day before and is saved. Similarly, in Collins's story about Labrador, the narrator again becomes lost, but this time in a mass of yellowish sea bubbles ten acres in size and ten to 40 feet deep. Completely disoriented and dazed by a fall, he is once again saved by a faithful animal friend, this time his dog, that comes to find him ("Lost Among Bubbles" 231).

In "Three Days at a Pigeon Roost" (1892), Thomson, known for his highly realistic adventure tales, forgets himself so far as to tell one of the best tall tales in the collection. In the middle of a historically-specific description of a passenger pigeon roost, he pops in an anecdote about the capture of a little bear cub who is promptly rescued by its perturbed mother. The narrator claims that the dam gave the old man "a playful stroke on the cranium with one of her fore-paws, sending him incontinently to grass and leaving the top of his head smooth and bare as a well-washed white turnip . . . from which not one single drop of blood flowed" (93-94). Whether this anecdote was given any credibility at the time of publication is impossible to ascertain, but it certainly has the look of a tall tale a hundred years later!

Sometimes what you hope is a hero tale might really be a tall tale, but how can you tell for sure? Another of Thomson's stories, "Harry Frost's Wedding March" (1903), concerns a young surveyor who eagerly travels 40 miles (plus a bit) on snowshoes and 25 miles by train in one day to meet his bride for their Valentine's Day wedding. Let's investigate whether this is possible. Harry Frost leaves from Lake Gogemic, snowshoeing 40 miles (plus a bit) to Gogebic Station where he is to meet the train by five o'clock, according to his surveying buddies, but four o'clock according to his own calculations. The train trip to Calibert where Nelly lives is 25 miles, making it possible, Harry estimates, to be easily ready for a wedding at eight o'clock. He leaves early: "Through leafless tree-tops Harry Frost saw stars fainting away in pearly light while he gulped his pannikin of tea" (73), which could easily be about seven o'clock at that latitude nearly two months after the winter solstice. Harry has about nine or ten hours to snowshoe a little more than 40 miles, or about 65 kilometres (one mile equals about 1.6 kilometres), making his average time between 8.3 and 9.2 kilometres an hour.

Compare Harry Frost's time with the statistics from three recent ten-kilometre snowshoe competitions available on the web: (1) The U.S. National Snowshoe Championships at Squaw Creek in Olympic Valley, Lake Tahoe, California, 7 March 2004; (2) Screamin' Snowman 10K Snowshoe

Race, Eldora Mountain Resort, Colorado, 9 February 2003; and (3) Perkinstown 10K Tramp Snowshoe Race, Perkinstown, Wisconsin, January 2004. (These are also known as six-mile races, since one kilometre is .621 miles.) Greg Krause, age 25, won the California course by running it in 40 minutes and placed fourth in the Colorado race for running the same distance in 58 minutes. Four other athletes in the Colorado race age 23 to 29 ran the course in 55 to 65 minutes. All three men in the 25 to 29 age group in the Wisconsin race ran the course in 63 to 107 minutes.

At this point, just as our calculations begin to show that Harry Frost's wedding march was physically possible, we must factor in the matter of equipment, trail conditions, and duration. Modern snowshoes are made of light-weight aluminum frames with nylon decks. Racing models are smaller and lighter than recreational models at 8.25" x 22" and weighing 2.8 lbs. Harry Frost wears the huge snowshoes used in the forests made of hickory wood frames (presumably with raw-hide netting) and carries a heavy half-axe (73). He dresses against the cold in layers of wool, a far heavier material than the modern synthetics used in all competitive sports.

As to terrain and snow conditions for the three races in California, Colorado, and Wisconsin, as compared to Harry Frost's, the search engine Google finds no Lake Gogemic anywhere, but does recognize a Lake Gogebic in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, a present-day snowmobiling haven. Since the train station is called Gogebic, the difference could be a typing error on the part of *Youth's Companion*. The terrain in the Upper Peninsula is similar to that described in Thomson's story and many French place names remain to mark the early inhabitants of the area. The snow conditions in Wisconsin would likely be closer to those of Upper Peninsula of Michigan, making the time for the races at Perkinstown, Wisconsin, a closer comparison to the possibilities for Harry Frost's speed in Michigan.

Trail conditions for modern snowshoe races are generally described as groomed alternating with several miles of unpacked powder (often following a snowmobile trail). Harry's trail begins "Beyond the water-hole, on untracked seven-foot-deep snow" (73). The narrator adds excitement to the tale by giving us Harry's time calculations. He tramps the first three miles in half an hour on flat, crusted snow, then four miles through woods in half an hour. Faced with a craggy summit "Harry twisted his feet free of the thongs, tied these together, swung the long snow-shoes at his back, and ascended by feet, knees, elbows, hands, unhesitating, unhalting." At noon, he confronts a ravine and must calculate whether the snow has slumped to the bottom or if it is being held on the tops of the trees. He decides to jump: "Fair and flat the great rackets, pressed upward to his feet by the resisting air, struck the surface." Success!

At one o'clock he crosses a cedar swamp, and at 1:30 he traverses without snowshoes over a windfall caused by a tornado that breaks up trees into huge piles of limbs and trunks to emerge scratched and bleeding with



a lump on his right eye. At 2:15, he hears the train whistle in the distance but knows that it usually waits at the station about two hours, which leaves six miles remaining to go by four o'clock. The terrain becomes more rugged and at 2:30, when it suddenly becomes smooth, he suspects another snowed-over ravine. Too large to jump, he crashes into it and falls 60 feet down into Calibert Creek and is carried downstream head over heels for ten yards (73-74). He clutches onto a boulder to pull himself out, takes off his snowshoes and climbs the tallest tree, cutting off the branches to stubs as he goes. But the surface snow slumps and bends the tree down, forcing him to walk through the creek in the wrong direction in order to find his way out. As the creek deepens it becomes more rapid, so that when he emerges onto flat land his moccasins and three pair of stockings plus a toe rag are soaking wet (74).

At 3:15, he still has five miles to go in 45 minutes, so he strips off his wet clothes, throws away his heavy axe, and runs all-out the six remaining miles to make the train. (Thomson apparently did not proofread his numbers, for the several discrepancies above are his, not mine. At the beginning of the story, Harry's surveyor crew had estimated the train would leave at five o'clock, not four o'clock as Harry calculates.) With two miles left he hears the train, but since he isn't waiting at the Gogebic station, the train pulls out. Indefatigable Harry continues running as he sees it leave. Fortunately, the engineer and brakeman go back to pick him up since they know it's his wedding day.

No doubt readers are pleased with the happy ending, but could Harry Frost really have done it? He keeps up the tramp about seven times longer than the racers, eating lunch as he moves, and travelling 40 miles in nine or ten hours. The racers travel six miles in 40 to 60 minutes. On top of that Harry sings while he races: "Sing he must, and he did without a singing voice or any verse in memory except the great lilting refrain of the *voyageurs'* chant: 'Roulent, roulant, ma boule roulant, / En roulant, ma boule!' He trolled it loud" (73). Early in the tale, the narrator describes Harry's physical condition as "a young, hard six-footer in perfect condition. To his men's experienced ears the rapid click-clack of his hickory frames told of a pace that not one of them could maintain for an hour" (73). So is "Harry Frost's Wedding March" a tall tale?

Here's my vote: There's a slim chance Harry could have done it. But whether or not he did, Harry is not a mere man. He's a hero. His abilities put him in a whole different category of traditional fantasy. The qualities associated with a hero figure are usually nobility, courage, an ability (such as great strength), good fortune (favoured of the gods), and fame as a warrior or for military achievements. Harry has all of these: he is the leader of the surveying team and his men from various ethnic backgrounds uniformly admire him. His undertaking on snowshoes shows great courage, for the challenging terrain is said to have killed lesser men. The pace of the

race on snowshoes demonstrates phenomenal strength and endurance. He is fortunate to have the good will of the train engineer and brakeman who turn back and pick him up so that he can achieve his goal. These traits constitute hero status in the New World.

A fascinating example of an established legend that incorporates tall tale elements retold in the periodical fiction as a hero tale occurs in Mackie's "Big Mac: An Episode of the Canadian Backwoods" (1908). The story seems to have originated with the legendary Canadian Joe Montferrand, the epic timber beast — *les bûcherons* — of nineteenth-century shantymen. In an interview with Donald MacKay, Charlie MacCormick of Port-Menier, Anticosti, says, "A lot of people think Joe Montferrand [sic] was just a story. My god, my grandfather worked with him! He and my grandfather, Michael MacCormick, rafted wood on the Ottawa River Together" (MacKay 35). Apparently Montferrand grew to be a very tall man for a French Canadian of his generation — 6' 2" — and inherited tremendous strength plus the agility to leap from the floor in a somersault and kick "the imprint of his heels on the eight-foot ceiling. All his life his enemies feared Joe Montferrand's boots" (35). Part of his legend connects him with pretty girls, some with his mythical pet white moose. Tales of Joe Muffraw, as he was known in English-speaking lumber camps, seem to pre-date those of Paul Bunyan and his Blue Ox, Babe, for the Bunyan tall tales first appeared in the 1850s in the Adirondacks, New York, and Michigan, when the Joe Montferrand legends were already well established (39).

Mackie's version of the legendary hero, named St. Arnaud, pales compared to the original researched by Donald MacKay above. All he gives us is the fact that a French Canadian lumberjack by the name of St. Arnaud loves the same girl as Mac, the big Scottish boss. Both men demonstrate their bravery in dislodging a log jam but become stranded just as the jam snags on a rock above a waterfall. Who will live to win the lovely Marie Deschambeault of Frontenac? The folktale tradition would favour the traditional underdog, the French-Canadian; the adventure genre would favour the man of Empire, the Scotsman. Mackie's name would suggest his allegiance to the Anglo view of imperial heroism, but he refuses to make the choice. He leaves his readers with the unsatisfying ending, "Who can say?" (247).

Fairy tale variations also appear in this collection of short adventure fiction. The protagonist in McFarlane's "Cissy Make-Believe" (1902) shows a special gift for reading but her hopes of furthering her education are thwarted by her family's poverty and the needs of five older brothers. When Cissy uses her reading to save the day — she prevents both her aunt's and her own death — the grateful uncle pledges to finance whatever education she cares to pursue. Here Cissy's inherent love for reading establishes her soul as belonging to a higher, literate class. Her uncle acts as the enabling figure, the fairy godfather, and restores her to a class equal to her love of

learning, thus conforming to the Cinderella tale of class restoration (not class mobility, a frequent misattribution).

Similarly, the protagonist of Thomson's "The Jaritor's Boy" (1891) shows elements of the male Cinderella pattern. He acts within a cultural system — the school — above his economic class, because he successfully navigates ethical matters at the gentry's level (573). Class mobility occurs because the boy embodies the qualities of that class. The suggestion seems to be that by some quirk of fate a certain person can be born to the wrong class. In both stories, the youth is merely being adjusted to the proper sphere. It's not an earned mobility so much as a reinstatement to the appropriate order of things. In regard to both these stories, it is worth remembering that in Canadian nineteenth-century society class, mobility was very rare. As Cross notes,

Workers were regarded by those above them as different, different not only in status but in outlook and capacity. They were seen as an unstable factor in the social order. And they were seen as a permanent factor. None of these assessments of the lower class were premised on easy, natural social mobility. Class lines were clear and permanent. (3)

Both stories are the product of the middle-class hopes and aspirations of Edward William Thomson, who published under an assortment of pseudonyms, including "Arthur McFarlane." By this time in Canada, the middle class was well aware that improvements in the conditions of a class would likely occur through education, not actual social mobility as in the American dream.

A fairy tale containing parallels to Little Red Riding Hood, written by Batten, opens with a nine-year-old child being sent by her mother to the lumber camp where her father works to take him his supper. She loses her way and is found by a ferocious grey wolf. Soon an entire pack trees her. The surprising title of this tale is "Jim and the Wolves: The True Story of a Canadian Boy's Pluck and Endurance" (1912) because Jim is the sixteen-year-old cookee of the camp who acts in the role of woodsman. The adventure tale amplifies the woodsman's role to almost eclipse the character of Red Riding Hood. In the Brothers Grimm version of "Little Red Cap" the woodsman appears briefly at the end of the tale in order to rescue the child and her grandmother. In the adventure fiction not just one woodsman goes after the big bad wolf, but all the rest of the lumberjacks in the camp, including the child's father, who usurps the grandmother's role, for no grandmother even appears in this testosterone-driven adventure (818). The combined male valour in the ensuing wolf hunt far outweighs any plot-interest contributed by the child. If a reader expects realism or true-to-life motives, the tale collapses. Don't ask why the father needs to be brought his dinner when there is a "cookee" in camp feeding all the other men. Don't ask why

the mother sends the child out in light snow with seventy degrees of frost — that's 40 degrees below zero, the temperature where Fahrenheit and Celsius converge and bare flesh freezes within minutes. Don't ask why a wolf would brave knocking a lantern of fire out of a man's hand. And so on. Realism here is merely a prose style, for this is truly a fairy tale.

We encounter a variation of the Three Bears tale in a bee-keeping story told by Pollock, "A Shot in the Dark" (1914), one of his eleven tales in which youthful entrepreneurs create a cash influx for the family farm bordering bush-country wilderness. Remember that in the tale collected by the Opies as the first version told in England, the role of Goldilocks is taken by an old woman who breaks the law by entering and pillaging the house of some wealthy bear burghers. Her fate after jumping out the window is unknown: "Out the little old Woman jumped; and whether she broke her neck in the fall; or ran into the wood and was lost there; or found her way out of the wood, and was taken up by the constable and sent to the House of Correction for a vagrant as she was, I cannot tell. But the Three Bears never saw any thing more of her" (Opie and Opie 268). In Pollock's reverse version, the three forest bears pillage the bee houses containing the boys' wealth — honey. The brothers defend themselves with a flash camera, which causes the bears to run off into the woods without the honey, unapprehended and unpunished (453). Both tales assume that one group's right to the goods of civilization (the two boys and the three house bears) is greater than the other group's need for food (the old woman and the three forest bears). Apparently, neither animality nor humanness is the telling difference in the ideology of survival, but rather, class. The old woman and the forest bears are disenfranchised creatures given out-cast status in terms of city values — goods and possessions.

"Mina," a moniker very close to "Anon" in its inability to accurately attribute a story to a specific author, gives us a literary fairy tale whose textual allusions and magical elements foreshadow the tales of magic realism popular in the twentieth century. "Tom's Arctic Adventure" (1899) opens with a protagonist so engrossed in reading the adventure fiction in a periodical (no doubt very much like *Golden Days for Boys and Girls* in which the tale was published) that he neglects to do his chores. Later that night an elf takes him on an Arctic adventure through vast distances of time and space, whereupon a little old woman, who announces she is his great-great-grandmother, requires him to stack the wood he neglected the day before. Each time he returns from feasting on mince pie, the logs are again scattered, a recurrence broken only when he does the job without complaining. In the manner of magical realists, the resolution occurs when the child falls out of bed and learns it was all a dream (172). Also true to the tenets of this subgenre, several literary allusions occur in this very short piece. The protagonist's name is Tom and his mother's name is Mrs. Brown, a less than subtle reference to the famous novel by Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's School*

*Days* (1857). The line "Tom felt as 'mad as a March hare' now" refers to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). The tall pole Tom finds carries the inscription "I certify this to be the North Pole. John Franklin," referring to a conquest the author imagines was made by the famous British explorer who disappeared in the Arctic in 1845 with all his crew (Newman 145).

Magic, defined as an occurrence that defies known science, is key in much folk literature. While its incidence in these periodicals is drastically lowered by the advent of realism, some magical elements nevertheless surface independent of what today's reader might attribute to outmoded religious beliefs. George Douglas opens "The Dogs of the Drift" (1899) after the manner of a chronicler of folk literature: "Of the ease with which, amongst ignorant and primitive peoples, a myth or a superstition may be brought to life, a most impressive instance once came under my own observation" (133). The inhabitants of Newfoundland see apparitions in the mists and strange creatures in the dusky forest. They often live in lonely and isolated circumstances, and "If left in ignorance, they grow, of necessity superstitious. The mouths of these islanders overflow with unearthly tales" (133). Not surprisingly, the ogre/monster figure of the grey wolf often takes a supernatural dimension. Douglas's tale involves

a team of gigantic dogs, lean, and pale in color, driven furiously by a gaunt woman in flowing garments of white. They were said to appear to travelers caught journeying in a storm, and to dash past with shrill howls when the storm was at its highest. Never closer did they come than within a stone's throw; but their coming meant death ere sunset to one or another of those met by the apparition. (133)

Roberts also acts as folklorist collector of supernatural tales of the Newfoundlander when he positions "Labrador Wolves" (1893) as having the same

possible connection with a throng of terrible legends, the scenes of which are laid along those shores [of Newfoundland]. . . . [I]ts northeastern coast has been peopled, by the vivid imaginations of the fishermen and sailors, with supernatural beings of various fashions, all agreeing, however, in malignity and noisiness. Demons and gryphons and monsters indescribable were supposed to haunt the bleak hills and dreadful ravines. Ships driven reluctantly inshore by stress of weather were wont to carry away strange tales of howlings and visions to freeze the marrow of the folks at home. (503)

Roberts's tale reverts to a rational-man-against-hungry-wolf story, ending with the victory of the men and the departure of the wolves, but supernatural elements are at the core.

Thomson's better-known tale, "The Red-Headed Windego" (1893), also pits the rational reader's mind against the superstitious predilections of a gang of French-Canadian axmen, members of a survey team. The author states that "Windegos are monsters who take on or relish human form, and vary their size at pleasure" (7). Apparently, much of the fun in the story is derived from the reader's rational understanding juxtaposed with the axmen's irrational fears, all good-naturedly turning into a practical joke in the end.

Thomson writes another story of French Canadian superstition, "The Curse of Marie Fils Du Grand" (1895), in what would have then been recognized as the dialect of the half-breed. Here, white men on a fishing trip shoot a raven, ignorant that the raven is considered a witch bird and that killing it brings a curse of rain. Finally, it is revealed that all the events are brought to pass by the vindictive curse of the wife of the guide the white men did not hire (2). The tale forms a fascinating study not only of how folk superstition becomes embedded in minds unexercised in rationalism but also, perhaps more importantly, how snippets of First Nations myth become intertwined with the folklore of long-established European immigrants.

Canadians have no body of folktales that compares to those of culturally-distinct societies. These folktales are taken from First Nations peoples and from European countries, plus from every other group of people who have transplanted their language and culture north of the 49th parallel. Some of the stories in this collection are realistic animal tales, some are adventure fiction, but many form a kind of folk literature that translates the ideology of late nineteenth-century Canadian culture into basic, formulaic folktales about wild animals and intrepid adventurers. Print media simply stopped the process of slow change through oral telling that would have occurred over millennia, and saved the variants, rough edges and all, at a time when the oral tradition was inoperable due to proximity and increased literacy of the populace. These folktale variations will charm you, entertain you, and many will puzzle you — but that's the nature of traditional fantasy.

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