

Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, Antimodernism, and National Identity in Canada,
1897-1943

by

Brett Davidson

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-83163-2
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ISBN: 978-0-494-83163-2

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The Department of History recommends to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
acceptance of the thesis

**Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, Antimodernism, and
National Identity in Canada, 1897-1943**

submitted by

Brett Davidson, B.A. Hons.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

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27 September 2011

Abstract

This thesis examines the literary career of the Canadian poet and writer Charles G.D. Roberts in order to illustrate problems and possibilities faced by Canadian writers during the first half of the twentieth century. During these years, Canada shifted from colonial status to autonomy and nationhood, and from a colonial mentality to the shaping of a distinct, if ambiguous, Canadian identity. Many writers during these years left Canada to find success in the world of letters, and few returned to inspire the next generation of writers. In doing so, Roberts contributed to a sense of national pride and of the possibilities of a literary career in Canada. Moreover, he helped define cultural space for Canadians. The thesis uses Roberts as a medium for exploring the relationship between Canadian authors and the wider transatlantic literary community during decades that witnessed a shift from Victorian romanticism to twentieth-century modernism.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This project began with a statement from Robert Darnton's *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*: "One could learn a great deal about attitudes toward books and the context of their use by studying the way they were presented..."¹ These words led this author to look at the way in which the Canadian author Charles G.D. Roberts presented himself and his work to his audience. The success of the man and his stories said a great deal about the Canadian, American, and British societies that embraced Roberts's work. His stories were always presented as tales of the Canadian wilderness; yet while this said much about Canada, the story of the author was even more intriguing. It is the story of a university professor from a middle-class family who goes to New York and convinces everyone that he is an expert on life in the backwoods. He had spent thirteen years living in rural New Brunswick and had indeed lived close to nature. Canoeing, camping, and sports were all passions of this athletic man. Charles G.D. Roberts was an excellent storyteller and he truly did have a gift for writing. However, a big part of his success came from the fact that he was writing for a society that was craving what might be called "backwoods masculinity."

The "backwoodsman" character that Roberts wrote about was a part of an identity that had been attached to Canada by outsiders while Canadians were still unsure of their place and character. This uncertainty in Canadian society has created an interesting if somewhat schizophrenic national voice, literature, and intellectual culture. The image these writings provided was of the Canadian man running through the woods, exercising dominion over the

¹ Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1990), 126.

wilderness surrounding him. The animal stories that involved no human characters, except in observational roles, exhibit a “backwoods masculinity” in that they hold up Roberts as an expert in wilderness life. The poetry, novels and short stories of this leader in Canadian letters all created an image of a rustic, athletic, and vibrant Canadian man. Roberts was writing for a particular audience: the English-Canadian middle-class male. This group was reeling under the constraints of Victorian society. Fears of effeminacy in modern society led these men to attempt to reclaim their masculinity in the woods, through natural science and sport. While the industrial revolution spawned such antimodernist reactions around the western world, in Canada this took place during its formative decades, when the nation was experiencing doubts and concerns over the continued viability of the national project.

The question of Canada’s national identity has resulted in much debate as historians and journalists have attempted to provide an answer. According to the journalist Andrew Cohen, “The Canadian Identity, as it has come to be known, is as elusive as the sasquatch and Ogopogo.”² Historians have tried to find the answer and all they can agree on is that there is no one answer. Some have tended towards duality, trying to find the answer in the relations of French and English Canadians. Ramsay Cook’s article, “The Canadian Dilemma,” explores this tenuous relationship and its implications for national unity. Other scholars, including Cook himself, have looked at Canada’s identity as a multiplicity of regional identities separated by geography but held together by political union. The only consensus among Canadianists is that identity is a tricky question. That is why this project will avoid the big question in favour of the smaller question: what did being Canadian mean to Charles G.D. Roberts?

² Andrew Cohen, *The Unfinished Canadian: The People We Are* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2007), 3.

Middle-class Canadians were trying to use culture to advance their vision of Canada.

Ryan Edwardson explains in his book, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood*, Roberts was a part of the group of middle-class writers, intellectuals and moralists who attempted to create a national culture for Canada.³ He was a leading figure in the effort to create a Canadian nationality. In 1899 Roberts entered a competition for the writing of a history of Canada. The winning textbook would be used in Ontario schools. Roberts romantic vision of Canada was brought to life with phrases like, “Our climate, though it varies enormously over an area so vast, is such as has always bred the strongest and most enterprising of races of mankind.”⁴ According to James Polk the book was considered too entertaining to be conducive to education; however, the book did go into several reprints.⁵ These lines from Charles G.D. Roberts’s *A History of Canada* epitomize the author’s theories regarding the people of Canada and their place in the world.

This project is a cultural history of a late nineteenth and early twentieth-century English-Canadian literary figure. Applying a history of the book framework, the thesis will use Roberts’ stories and the process of book making as its driving force. Issues of gender, class, and nationality will be addressed. Race is also an interesting question even though English Canadians are not by today’s standards a racial group. Even so, Roberts’s contemporaries would have conceived of the English-French conflict in terms of race. This conflict has very little weight in this study, but is always present at least in the background of Canadian histories. The

³ Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 28.

⁴ Charles G.D. Roberts, *A History of Canada* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1898), 438.

⁵ James Polk, *Wilderness Writers: Ernest Thompson Seton, Charles G.D. Roberts, Grey Owl* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1972), 84.

main focus will be on how the categories of analysis--class, race, and gender--intersect in the new romanticist conception of Canada represented by Roberts's work.

The history of the Book has been described as "...interdisciplinarity run wild."⁶ In Canada the history of the book has been dominated by the writings of English professors, from Carl Klinck's *A Literary History of Canada* to Nick Mount's *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York*. Historians have been underrepresented in this field. Another literary studies practitioner, Margaret E. Turner, in her book *Imagining Culture: New World Narrative and the Writing of Canada*, examines the origins of Canadian literature and the problematic relationship between national identity and literary voice, "That this quandary on the level of political and ideological authority," she writes, "has its correlative in a historical unclarity regarding the status and interpretation of its cultural products..."⁷ The question for Canadians has always been where we belong: are we the colonizers or the colonized? This enters the debate between imperialists and liberal-nationalists and is essentially a debate over where we fit in the imperial enterprise. The process of imagining Canada began before the first explorers left for North America, when Europeans put Canada into their own comprehension nexus.

While anthropomorphism had existed for centuries, the new romanticism ushered in a new type of nature story. The new nature stories not only featured animals, but also claimed that the central figures of the narrative were based on the real life animals they portrayed. Ralph Lutts describes the essential quality of this new literature, "Where the nature literature of the United States focused on the human experience, this new Canadian approach focused on the

⁶ Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette*, 125.

⁷ Margaret E. Turner, *Imagining Culture: New World Narrative and the Writing of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 108.

animal's experience."⁸ The problem for most readers was that these stories claimed to be natural history as much as they were literature. In the same way that true crime writers clung to realism, Roberts, Seton, and the others ferociously defended similar claims. The writers believed that maintaining their audience was dependant on the believability of their stories.

The audience always looms large in the mind of an author and Roberts was no exception, as he too responded to the tastes of his readers. Roger Chartier believes that to examine the relationship between reader and text it is necessary "...to reconstruct that process in its historical dimensions, we have to begin by considering how the meanings of texts depend on the forms and circumstances through which they are received and appropriated by their readers or listeners."⁹ Robert Darnton's *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* provides a model for bringing all the aspects of the history of the book together and taming an interdisciplinarity run amuck in the field. Darnton's "Communication Circuit" looks at literature as a continuous dialogue between authors, publishers, printers, editors, and readers.¹⁰ The writing process can start from any point including the reader. Darnton's model, while not directly employed, has heavily influenced how the categories of Author, Audience, and Publisher are conceived in this thesis.

Cultural historians and scholars engaged in literary studies have approached the topic by asking questions about how Canadians see themselves. The image of the Canadian woodsman is a big part of the myth of Canada, and is still prevalent in the media of this heavily urban-dwelling nation. This shift happened during, and mirrored, Roberts's life. He was born in

⁸ Ralph H. Lutts, *Nature Fakers: Wildlife, Science, and Sentiment* (Golden, Co.: Fulcrum Publishing, 1990), 34.

⁹ Guglielmo Cavallo, Roger Chartier, and Linda Cochrane, *A History of Reading in the West* (Amherst, M.A.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 2.

¹⁰ Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette*, 111.

Douglas, New Brunswick, in a predominantly rural Canada and died in Toronto in an urbanized nation. Justin D. Edwards, in the introduction to his book *DownTown Canada: the Writing of Canadian Cities*, discusses how urban-dwelling Canadians have trouble dealing with the fact that they live in cities. Even urban Canadians define themselves by the wide-open spaces and the wilderness of this vast land.¹¹ Richard Cavell looks at this issue and how it has played out in Canadian literature. Cavell states that descriptions of cities are outweighed by descriptions of nature in Canadian fiction.¹² The works of Cavell and Edwards discuss the ways in which Canadian identity has been tied to nature even when the majority of Canadians live in cities. Many Canadians still get swept away in the exoticism of the woods that Roberts describes in such vivid detail.

Intellectual history, especially in Canada deals with the intersection between philosophy and application of knowledge. The lack of truly innovative thinkers on the Canadian scene has created a truly unique approach to studying intellectual history in Canada. A.B. McKillop's *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era*, approaches Canadian intellectual history from perspective of the thought of educated yet ordinary Canadians: "...the conflict in the nineteenth century between the critical intellect and the moral sensibilities of Anglo-Canadians was also most evident within the educational institutions of the British North American colonies..."¹³ While the intellectual leaders of these debates lived across the Atlantic, culture connected Canadians to their motherland in Europe, "For such people, life at the edge of the forest was as close to European thought and culture as the nearest

¹¹ Justin D. Edwards. "Introduction," in *Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities*, ed. Justin D. Edwards and Douglas Ivison (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), iv.

¹² Richard Cavell. "An Ordered Absence: Defeatured Topologies in Canadian Literature," in *Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities*, ed. Justin D. Edwards and Douglas Ivison (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005)15.

¹³ A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal: McGill- Queen's University Press, 1979), 5.

reading lamp.” However, Canadians had a very hard time believing that they could be innovators and this “colonial mindset” was a big part of Roberts’s success. Canadians needed a trailblazer to pave the way and to show them that creativity and the life of the mind was indeed possible in the former colony.

Antimodernism is huge part of the intellectual culture of the late Victorian period. This work will approach this concept from the position of intellectual history. A.B. McKillop describes this field as it is performed in the Canadian context: “...intellectual history can perhaps best be understood in terms of its insistence that the value of ideas is derived from the relationship of those ideas to an historical context that is predominantly social in nature.”¹⁴ The historical context of antimodernism in Canada can be found in the move towards the new romanticism. Nick Mount describes the new romanticism as a shift away from stories about women and society, to stories about men doing manly things.¹⁵ The tastes of the reading audience had shifted away from the stories of Dickens, Trollope, and Austen, and more adventurous action-driven literary genres--in which Canadians were at the fore--began to dominate the bestseller’s lists. Through this method the impact of the ideas behind antimodernism can be examined.

Men of the industrialized world were ready for what Roberts and Canadian literature had to offer. The industrial revolution began in Canada in the 1880s, at the same time as the rest of the western world was experiencing an intensification of industrial life, and many middle-class urban men began to worry that they could lose their manhood. American intellectual historian T.J. Jackson Lears claims that antimodernist movement in the late nineteenth to early twentieth-

¹⁴ A.B. McKillop, *Contours of Canadian Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 4.

¹⁵ Nick Mount, *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 78.

century America was an expression of the subconscious fears of the middle-class intellectuals. Lears's approach combines Antonio Gramsci's theory of "cultural hegemony" with Max Weber's sociological outlook, and Sigmund Freud's view of the subconscious mind.¹⁶ In Lears's analysis the yearning for a return to nature and taste for pre-industrial culture was an expression of deep-seated fear over the shifting power relations in the gender roles. Donald Wright's article, "W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s- 1918," provides a different understanding of antimodernism. Wright approaches the subject as a coping mechanism utilized by men who felt too domesticated.¹⁷ Ian McKay, in his book, *The Quest of Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia*, looks at the use of the antimodern movement to attract tourists to the Maritimes. Antimodernism is a loosely defined term used to describe a wide spectrum of actions and reactions to the modern world.

The study of masculinity has faced a lot of opposition from scholars in the field of women's history as the people who engage in these studies tend to focus on all-male institutions, professions, or practices. It is impossible to understand men without looking at their relationship to women. Dealing primarily with Victorian middle-class men, John Tosh warns against looking at men in isolation, "Neither masculinity nor femininity is a meaningful construct without the other; each defines and is in turn defined by, the other."¹⁸ This is an important component to any scholarly work on masculinity. The writings of Charles G. D. Roberts present the reader with many female characters with which to make these relational comparisons. What makes the

¹⁶ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xv.

¹⁷ Donald A. Wright, "W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s- 1918," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, no.2 (1997): 135.

¹⁸ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 104.

characters even more intriguing is that they are being constructed by a middle-class man and so these women, who are from a wide range of backgrounds, represent a contemporary middle-class envisioning of these social groups. While the main thrust of Roberts's work was part of a perceived crisis of masculinity, this study will approach the crisis as a part of a larger system of social construction.

Masculinity, even inside the confines of a social category, is not a fixed set of behaviours. R. W. Connell, a sociologist and one of the foremost theorists in gender studies, describes masculinity as a hierarchical structure where one's place in the order of men is based on a host of societal factors.¹⁹ Mary-Ellen Kelm studies the construction of the heroic cowboy image that was used to sell Calgarians on the Calgary Stampede. The article "Manly contests: Rodeo Masculinities at the Calgary Stampede" discusses the multiplicity of masculine codes that existed in Canada divided by regional, racial, and class lines.²⁰ In the rodeo world the cowboy was the highest rung on the ladder of masculinity, while men who engaged in drinking, gambling, and other vices were considered to be of a lower order.²¹ One of the key factors in determining a man's place in the hierarchy of masculinity whether he is a cowboy or an aristocrat is his interactions with the opposite sex. Roberts created a world in which the backwoodsman was the top of the masculine food chain, and while the men were presented as rough, the values and ideas they espoused clearly show the author's middle-class worldview.

While masculinity and nationalism may seem like separate categories for us today, the Victorian era social commentators linked the state of the nation's manhood with the nation's

¹⁹R. W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 24.

²⁰ Mary-Ellen Kelm, "Manly Contests: Rodeo Masculinities at the Calgary Stampede," *The Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (2009): 715.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 719.

health. Boys' clubs, like the Boy Scouts, the Indian Braves, and numerous open-air clubs for inner city youth, began with the idea that strong men made for a strong nation. These two concepts will be explored separately and as a pair to see how the people of this period conceived these ideas and through this conception developed a better understanding of how the works of Charles G.D. Roberts were received. This becomes further complicated in a nation like Canada, which still feels a deep connection with Great Britain. All of these concepts and those mentioned above are tied up in the story of Charles G.D. Roberts, a true Canadian: writer, educator, father, lover, warrior, and sportsman.

Roberts was born on January 10, 1860, in Douglas, New Brunswick, in the Westcock Parsonage. This was a farm provided to his father, the Reverend George Goodridge Roberts, through his post with the local Anglican Church. Growing up in the Tantramar marshes near Sackville, New Brunswick, the young Roberts spent every free minute running off into the wilderness to commune with the muse that would inspire a 63 year career as a writer. The young boy loved to help the farm hands with their daily chores and enjoyed interacting with this rougher class of men. While the reverend never prevented his son from indulging in the outdoors, the father wanted his son to have a proper education and filled his children's days with Greek, Latin, math, and history. At the age of thirteen, Roberts moved with his family to Fredericton, where he was taught at collegiate school by the Canadian born apostle of Empire, Sir George R. Parkin. It is not, therefore, surprising to discover that Roberts grew up to be a staunch imperialist. In 1880, while attending the University of New Brunswick, Roberts released his first collection of poetry, *Orion and Other Poems*, to critical success. Working as a Professor of French and English at King's College in Windsor, Nova Scotia, from 1885-1895, he continued to write and get

published. In 1890 he was made a member of the Royal Society of Canada. The thesis begins its examination the life of Charles G.D. Roberts in 1897. While all of the previously mentioned parts of his life are important, this study will explore key moments in his later life.

The next chapter, “The Animal Story,” deals with the moment in October of 1898 when Charles G.D. Roberts found himself in high demand due to the success of Ernest Thompson Seton’s *Wild Animals I Have Known*. While Roberts had already published several works, including collections of nature stories such as *Earth’s Enigmas* and *Around the Campfire*, the author was now able to support himself on writing alone. People believed that they were reading accurate portrayals of animal behaviour, because Roberts was presented to his audience as a Canadian, and an experienced woodsman. The focus of the chapter is the reasons people looked to Roberts for their animal stories. Readers were looking for experts on wilderness, and perhaps this was why Roberts wore his Canadianness like a badge, for Canada was seen as a very rustic place populated mainly by wild animals and lumberjacks. The audience turned to this author because his stories interacted with the main environmental debates of the day: nature fakers, conservationism, and the effects of zoos. This chapter covers the early part of his career as he establishes his image.

The animal story shocked many people at the time with its stunning imagery and the focus on life and death battles. However, the stories seem to flow quite naturally out of the American tradition of nature stories led by the writings of Thoreau. In *Nature Writing in America: Essays Upon a Cultural Type*, Peter A. Fritzell describes this tradition as focused on the psychic interaction of the human self and the non-human world.²² The animal story differed mainly in the fact that the psyche in question belonged to an animal. While many critics such as

²² Peter A. Fritzell, *Nature Writing and America: Essays Upon a Cultural Type* (Ames, IO: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 157.

Northrop Frye, Jim Polk, and Margaret Atwood, have focused on the element of survival that plays such a large part in these stories, the reasons can be attained by Robert Darnton's observation that the society was looking for stories of life and death as this was the side of nature that they wanted to see.

The third chapter, "The Backwoodsmen," the most literary of all the chapters, deals with the character of the backwoodsman and the statement Roberts was making about himself, and Canada. The chapter compares the Canadian backwoodsman to his American counterpart, the cowboy. In their book, *True Crime True North: The Golden Age of Canadian Pulp Magazines*, historians Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange look into the world of Canadian pulp fiction. In it they discuss how to make an art form Canadian by examining a Canadian genre called the "Northerns:" "Like Westerns with their stress on man-size adventures, they were uniquely Canadian because they specialized in regional crimes (Canada's Arctic) and regional crime fighters (Mounties)."²³ Was the backwoodsman just the cowboy of the Canadian woodlands? Regardless of the nationality, the idealized form of masculinity is explored as the chapter seeks to better understand the society that produced these characters.

These short stories were moulded out of the British tradition of nature stories which focuses on the rural lifestyle over survival in the wilderness. Peter Fritzell describes the juxtaposition of town and country in British literature in which all the evils are in the town and the true English heartland is to be found in the country.²⁴ This opposition was the main manifestation of antimodern sentiment in England during this period, explains Frank Trentmann, in his article "Civilization and its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the

²³ Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange, *True Crime True North: The Golden Age of Canadian Pulp Magazines* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004), 2.

²⁴ Peter Fritzell, *Nature Writing and America*, 137.

Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth Century Western Culture.”²⁵ The heart of England could be found in the countryside, and the rambling movement set out to find it.

Trentmann explores the process by which the nation became linked with the countryside while rural characters cast aside the evils of society in order to live the simple life of a created but supposedly remembered golden age. The chapter will be exploring the author’s image through the backwoodsman character that Roberts identified so closely with.

The fourth chapter, entitled “Duty to the Empire,” starts with the outbreak of the Great War and a fifty-four year old Canadian writer who felt it was his duty to protect the British Empire. The ageing Roberts signed up immediately in the Legion of Frontiersmen, a paramilitary organization made up of men who had spent time in the colonies and dominions. The frontiersmen believed that the skills they had learned in the backwoods would be an asset to the Crown. To better understand this allegiance, we turn to Carl Berger’s study of imperialist nationalism, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867- 1914*. This book describes the way the movement appealed to the middle-class descendants of the United Empire Loyalists, yet even then mainly in the urban centers of the Maritimes and south western Ontario.²⁶ But this does not mean that Imperialism was not a national ideology: “...in the context of Canadian history Imperialism means that movement for the closer union of the British Empire through economic and military cooperation and through political changes which would give the dominions influence over imperial policy.”²⁷ The chapter covers Roberts’s army career from frontiersmen to Major with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. This period of his life is a

²⁵ Frank Trentmann, “Civilization and its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth Century Western Culture,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no 4 (1994): 590.

²⁶ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867- 1914* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1970), 10.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 3.

terrific window into Roberts's image of himself as a man and his conception of what it meant to be a Canadian.

To answer this question, Canadian historians have turned to theories of nationalism. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* explores the recent construction of nationalism, in comparison to the perceived timelessness of this ideology.²⁸ Anderson looks to the religious community, and the dynastic realm, "For both of these, in their heydays, were taken-for-granted frames of reference, very much as nationality is today."²⁹ Anderson points to the late eighteenth century as the point when nationalist sentiment began. Michael A. Robidoux applies Anderson's historical materialist model of nationalism, using Canada's attachment to hockey as a starting point: "Hockey provides Canada a means by which to be distinguished."³⁰ Robidoux sees the quasi-religious status hockey holds in Canadian society as a system of control. Organized sport allowed for the safe and controlled release of aggression, and Canadians take pride in their manly exploits on the ice.³¹ This pride remains present as we adorn ourselves with maple leaves to cheer on our boys at the numerous international competitions Canadian hockey fans follow. However, theories of nationalism become complicated when dealing with the Imperialist philosophies that were circulating in Canada at this time.

"Presiding over Canadian Literature," the fifth chapter, begins with Roberts's return to Canada in 1925, after 18 years of living in Europe. His literary output was beginning to decline and the writer began to live as a literary sage. He had been called the "father of Canadian

²⁸ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁰ Michael A. Robidoux, "Imagining a Canadian Identity through Sport: A Historical Interpretation of Lacrosse and Hockey," *Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 56 (2002): 211.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 219.

literature” and now he became the leader of the Canadian Authors Association. This was an institutional manifestation of the leading role he was already playing. The story culminates in the 1933 Canadian authors’ trip to London. As the now honorary President of the association it was an embarrassment that Roberts was unable to pay his own way. The problem of his finances was now a national problem because of the negative statement it made about Canadian literature. How could the leading Canadian author be broke? This incident was a contributing factor in the decision to establish a pension for Canada’s preeminent man of letters. Another factor was the relationship between Roberts, and fellow New Brunswicker, Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, who was an admirer of Roberts.

Roberts tried to protect his image in the telling of his life story. Elsie Pomeroy was Roberts’s official biographer and spent a great deal of time working with him, going over how he wanted his life to be represented. Pomeroy was a fan of Roberts and it comes across in her version of his life. Lorne Pierce, editor of the Ryerson Press and friend of Roberts, stopped the release of a tell-all book written by Roberts’s son, Lloyd. The suppression of the manuscript caused a ten-year rift in the relationship between father and son, reflecting how important it was for Roberts to protect his reputation. The final biography, written by John Coldwell Adams, begins with Adams relating a conversation he had with Pomeroy. In it, she revealed stories about Roberts that she did not feel were appropriate to print in an official biography. From the beginning Adams tried to show a more realistic version of Roberts than the one Pomeroy presented. These biographies provide a window into the factors that combined to shape Roberts’s identity, and opinions. It is impossible to know why a person behaves the way he does at any given point in his life; however, these biographies offer many suggestions as to the motives that helped shape Roberts’s work.

The final chapters deal mainly with Roberts's legacy and his place in Canadian literature. Late in life, the author sought to pass his wisdom on to the next generation and reap the benefits his literary reputation. He continued to write during the years from 1925- 1943, which saw the 1933 release of *Eyes in the Wilderness*. Some of his best poetic work came during World War Two as he felt compelled once again to contribute to the war effort. In 1939 as hostilities began overseas, the seventy-nine-year-old Roberts began to write poems in support of the war effort. These poems are another glowing example of Roberts's imperialist nationalism. While he would not live to see the end of the war he was an extremely vocal supporter of Canada's armed forces.

As the end neared, Charles G.D. Roberts began to focus his attention on the writing of his biography. Elsie Pomeroy and Roberts spent three nights a week together working on the project.³² In 1943 Charles married his second wife, Joan Roberts (nee Montgomery). They had been courting in secret, and one month after their marriage he died of natural causes. The little boy from the Tantramar marshes was held up as the guiding light by those cultural advocates who were trying to construct a Canadian nationality. His image, and his person, became synonymous with the state of Canadian literature. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the methods, and circumstances, by which Charles G.D. Roberts created his image as the all-Canadian man at a time when no one, least of all a Canadian, knew what that meant.

³² Roberts to Lorne Pierce, Toronto, February 27, 1941, in *The Collected Letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 606.

Chapter 2

The Animal Story

Leaving his post at King's College in 1895, after ten years as a professor of English and French, Charles G.D. Roberts began the most unstable, and yet profitable, period of his life. It took two years of searching for work before the wandering wordsmith would find a new job as the editor of the *Illustrated American*. Roberts held this post for a matter of months, but this was the impetus for his move to New York. When he headed to New York, Roberts had already published three books of poetry, two collections of short stories, and one full length novel in Canada, Britain and the United States. He had made a name for himself as a serious writer and yearned for a chance to write full-time. With one failed attempt at making a living as a freelance writer, and a short stint as editor of *The Week* already under his belt, Roberts moved his family back to Fredericton, and on Feb. 2, 1897, the poet left for New York.

Roberts led the life of a swinging bachelor, living with his cousin Bliss Carman. While he no doubt made many contacts, and benefitted greatly from his schmoozing, his real break was the result of forces beyond his control. Roberts's first published animal tale, "Do Seek Their Meat from God," was released to moderate success in 1892. Collections of stories based in nature, *Earth's Enigmas*¹ and *Around the Camp-Fire*,² were released in 1896, and both were reprinted numerous times. However it was not until October 1898, when Ernest Thompson Seton released *Wild Animals I Have Known*, that a demand for animal stories existed.³ While Roberts had sold many stories by 1898, and he had made quite a name for himself, the release of Seton's full length work marked a change in Roberts's career. He began to focus the majority of his

¹ Charles G.D. Roberts, *Earth's Enigmas* (Boston: Lamson, 1896).

² Charles G.D. Roberts, *Around the Camp Fire* (Toronto: Briggs, 1896).

³ John Coldwell Adams, *Sir Charles God Damn: The Life of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 85.

attention on animal stories. The popularity of the animal story dwindled by the end of World War One. Once provocative and edgy, nature stories were relegated to the genre of children's literature, appearing in grade school textbooks and cheap reprints geared to younger readers. Fortunately for the author, before fading from the spotlight, the nature story brought Roberts international acclaim. In this period, from 1898 to 1914, the image that Roberts would continue to protect and live off for the rest of his life came into existence. Roberts released works of poetry, non-fiction, and historical romance; however, almost every year saw the release of a new collection of animal fiction.

This chapter will assess the role of the animal story in building the image of Charles G.D. Roberts, "father of Canadian literature." Several questions will be asked of these texts. What did they say about Canada's international reputation? How were they received by the audience? Why did publishers turn to Roberts to produce this type of story? We will see that because of existing perceptions regarding nature, and Canada, Roberts was able to release many collections of animal stories and make his mark on the literary world. We will start with a question: what separates the animal stories of the 1890s from previous generations of animal yarns.

Roberts saw the animal story as part of a noble tradition, since animals had been a significant muse for human creative energy since the beginnings of human existence. Cave paintings, totem poles, and fables have all used animals to communicate their message. So what made the genre of animal stories that began in the late 1890s different? Roberts explained the significance of the "new" animal stories at the beginning of his 1902 collection, *The Kindred of the Wild*: "Whether avowedly or not, it is with the psychology of animal life that the representative animal stories of to-day are first of all concerned."⁴ According to Roberts, the increased interest in natural science and close observation of animal life had led people to

⁴ Charles G.D. Roberts, *The Kindred of the Wild* (Toronto: Copp, Clark Company, 1902), 25.

believe that animal behaviour was more than just a chain of instinctual actions and reactions. As we shall see, it was this assertion that raised the ire of naturalist John Burroughs and American President Theodore Roosevelt. In Roberts's own assessment, the predecessors of the new genre, *Beautiful Joe* (1893), *Black Beauty* (1895), and *The Jungle Book* (1893), all books that contain anthropomorphic characters, inserted human psychology into the animal world. While Roberts believed this was a necessary step towards what he saw as the final evolution of the animal story, giving the animals human faculties like reason was going too far. The goal for Roberts was to understand the animals on their own terms, and that was why he saw it as the final evolution of the animal story, one in which the characterization of the creatures was based in the natural sciences.⁵ This perceived factual base was an important part of the experience of the reader.

The benefit for the reader in Roberts's estimation was a deep intimacy with the woods and her creatures without leaving the comforts of civilization. As Roberts so eloquently states, "It helps us return to nature, without requiring that we return to barbarism."⁶ The seemingly factual base of the stories meant that one could achieve a greater understanding of the woods without leaving his armchair. Roberts describes the experience as one of "refreshment and renewal."⁷ The weary urbanite cloistered away in his drawing room could escape to the open fields, get lost in the dense forests, and commune with the woodland creatures. The activity was not a rejection of society, or civilization; instead it was a reprieve from the daily grind. The reader was able to sit vicariously next to the campfire and listen as Roberts spun yarns throughout the night. The value, according to the authors of the "new animal stories," went beyond entertainment. Their devotees were receiving an education in the natural sciences at the

⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷ Ibid., 29.

same time.⁸ These opinions were shared by the practitioners of the animal story, and while it is likely that some of his fans felt that his stories had a scientific base, it is impossible to know how many people believed in the value of these stories in the same manner as Roberts. W.J. Keith, in his book *Charles G.D. Roberts*, claims that the animal stories worked because the audience believed that Roberts was an authority on the subject. A suspension of belief is achieved because of the image Roberts creates of himself as the young boy on the Tantramar marshes.⁹ The authenticity of the stories was important for the reader, since these stories were their connection to the natural world and it was not just the general audience who noticed the difference between Roberts's stories and the traditional anthropomorphic animal tale.

The editor of *Harper's Monthly* from 1889 to 1899, Margaret Elizabeth Sangster, had a keen eye for literary talent. Sangster had also penned many articles and short stories before turning her talents to editing. In 1900, after receiving a copy of Roberts's latest collection of short stories, Sangster wrote to Roberts to praise his literary style. Sangster recognized the genius of Roberts's work before most. She was part of the editorial team at *Harper's Monthly* when they published Roberts's first animal story, "Do Seek their Meat from God," released in 1892. Sangster claimed in a letter that Roberts's prose contained "All the mystery and feeling of the fresh air." She goes on to discuss the freshness of Roberts's approach to animal characters.¹⁰ Sangster had written children's stories involving animal characters and it can be assumed from her position in the literary world that she was aware of the previous literary treatment of animal characters. This experienced reader had never before encountered the graphic detail of Roberts's wilderness, and his stories felt real to Sangster, and other readers, because of the openness with

⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹ W.J. Keith, *Charles G.D. Roberts* (Toronto: Copp, Clark Company, 1969), 94.

¹⁰ Margaret Elizabeth Sangster to Charles G.D. Roberts, New York, Nov. 9, 1900, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

which the stories tackled life and death. This newness was the quality that the audience craved. Wilderness has throughout time been portrayed as a terrifying menace to human society. The terror had come from a sense of the unknown; the new animal stories now provided the same scary image by explaining the previously unknown.

In order to understand how seriously this assertion of understanding animal psychology was taken we only have to look at the “Nature Fakers” controversy of the early 1900s. Could animals really think? If they did think, what gave these animal story writers the right to say they knew what the animals were thinking? While most of the animal story practitioners were outdoorsmen, to one extent or another, it seemed a far cry to declare that any human could determine exactly what pressing matters troubled an otter’s mind. One of the main issues was that the stories were billed as natural history. The tales were clearly fictive accounts of animal life. Roberts never claimed he was recording actual events. The problem was that the authors were claiming to have a backdrop of scientific fact to their yarns. The challenge to animal psychology seemed to develop out of an ethical dilemma for sportsmen. If animals were more than just unthinking automatons, was it moral to kill them recreationally? Theodore Roosevelt the avid huntsman came to the defence of the middle class nimrods who still wanted to bag their trophies.¹¹

The first shot in this battle was fired in March, 1903, when *The Atlantic Monthly* ran John Burroughs’s article, “Real and Sham Natural History.” In it, he attacked the four main animal writers: Roberts, Seton, Davenport Hulbert, and William J. Long.¹² Burroughs believed that the animal stories were sensationalized fictions masquerading as natural science. The elderly essayist had spent most of his life studying the animals that lived around him and did not see any

¹¹ Ralph Lutts, *The Nature Fakers: Wildlife, Science & Sentiment* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1990), 10.

¹² John Coldwell Adams, *Sir Charles God Damn*, 95.

evidence that these creatures possessed anything more than instinct. Many of Burroughs' friends saw that "Burroughs was more comfortable with the Familiar than the exotic."¹³ He wrote about the common wildlife that Americans could find right outside their doors. The silver haired naturalist wrote about the accepted facts of nature.¹⁴ The idea that animals were thinking and possessed something close to reason was too much for the grandfatherly Burroughs to acknowledge.

There were many points of contention between Roberts and Burroughs and Roosevelt. Their positions on zoos, while never debated during the "nature faker" controversy, were also vastly different. Roosevelt helped to found the Boone and Crocket Club, a group of hunters who fought to protect large game animals. Among other activities the club worked to establish zoos in New York and Washington.¹⁵ Roberts's beliefs on zoos can be found throughout his animal collections. One example was "The Summons of the North" from Roberts's 1907 collection entitled *The Haunters of the Silences*, which can be viewed as an example of antimodernist thought. The story centers on the life of a polar bear, beginning with birth, and a year's tutelage under his mother; but the bear becomes stranded on an ice flow and is saved from starvation by a passing ship. The story ends with the bear's mysterious death in a city zoo presumably from a loss of freedom. This clearly illustrates Roberts's feelings concerning on the inhumane treatment of animals by the zoos of this time. The story contains a clear message about the effects of civilization on living things. The zoo represents the man-made world of civilization and as the bear feels the snow on his face reminding him of his natural home he realizes that he can never be happy in captivity, "To his heart it was the summons of the north, -- and suddenly his heart

¹³ Ralph Lutts, *The Nature Fakers*, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

answered.”¹⁶ The message about the damning effects of civilization is clear. To the downtrodden urban woodsmen the polar bear must have seemed to be a kindred spirit suffocating under man’s contrivances.

The Haunters of the Silences was released in the same year that Roosevelt ended the nature faker controversy with his own article, “Nature Fakers,” about the true “reality” of nature. The importance of this period for this study is not what the President said about nature and animal psychology. Burroughs was a respected naturalist and his attack on the nature writers hurt the readers’ confidence in Roberts as an authority on animals.¹⁷ This period, from 1903 to 1907, shifted Roberts’s work out of the realm of adult readership. While the stories had always been enjoyed by readers of all ages, they were now designated as children’s literature. Roberts would continue to write animal stories into the 1930s, releasing his final collection, *Eyes in the Wilderness*, in 1933. For the audience the meanings had changed, however. People had originally seen the animal story genre as a mixture of science and literature, for its stories took documented animal behaviours and used them to create a story. Yet by the end of his career the stories were viewed by the reading public as fictions about animals. Unfortunately many scholars have written about them from the later view of the stories and not the author’s original intention: Roberts believed his characters’ actions were based on the study of animal behaviour.

This is the understanding of Roberts’s animal stories that will guide our assessment. He believed he was writing stories based in animal psychology. W.J. Keith uses the word “authenticity” to describe the feeling of reality that people wanted from these stories.¹⁸ As George Altmeyer explains, people’s beliefs about nature are based on the cultural interpretations

¹⁶ Charles G.D. Roberts, *The Haunters of the Silences* (London: Duckworth, 1907), 30.

¹⁷ Ralph Lutts, *The Nature Fakers*, 184.

¹⁸ W.J. Keith, *Charles G.D. Roberts*, 94.

of the day.¹ Authenticity is a term that describes not the reality of nature, but the shared beliefs about what was nature. Charles G.D. Roberts had no formal training in biology, his only claim to authority was that he was Canadian, and Canada had a lot of nature. Through his enthusiasm for the outdoors he came to be considered an authority on the subject. The authority, of course, needed to be writing about the nature that people wanted to read about. Readers were looking for the savagery and carnage the first animal stories contained. The authenticity that the writers created allowed the reader to slip deeper into the stories and escape from the pressures of modern life. Roberts needed to cultivate this backwoodsman image in order to create the necessary conditions for people to fully enjoy the stories.

The reading public of the 1890s was looking for authenticity in their animal stories. Roberts, who had no formal training in biology, had to find a way to establish his credibility as an authority on animals. One fact that he and his publishers focused on was his nationality. Canada was a mostly rural country. While Roberts did spend much of his spare time fishing, canoeing, and camping, the readers, especially those from the United States and Britain, believed that being Canadian was enough to prove a writer knew something about wildlife. In previous generations Canadians had been seen as coming from a cultural backwater. This had been an impediment to being taken seriously as a writer. Prior to Roberts's success, Archibald Lampman, a writer from Roberts's generation, had believed that Canadians would not be capable of succeeding in the world of letters. In the late Victorian period, as people looked for mediums of escape from modernity, readers from the more advanced countries turned to Canada to save them from their industrial nightmare.

¹ George Altmeyer, "Three Ideas of Nature in Canada, 1893-1914," in *Consuming Canada: Readings in Environmental History*, eds. Chad Gaffield and Pam Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark, LTD., 1995), 100.

In this period, Canadian cities were experiencing many of the same changes as cities in Britain and America; however, Canada at the end of the nineteenth century still had a great deal of unexplored terrain. To the devotees of the cult of nature, the idea of “pristine or “untouched” wilderness held that mystic quality they desired. According to Altmeyer, many people living at the turn of the century saw nature as a rejuvenating force, and the antithesis to civilization, but in the sense that nature was real and civilization was artificial.²⁰ In 1896 the readers of *The Times*, in London, were informed that Canada was still in need of adventurers. In an article called “Unexplored Canada,” the writer describes a newly discovered portion of Quebec, “...a large extent of the newly-explored region is well adapted to agriculture... and that from the quartz veins which he saw he thinks it possible that further exploration may result in the discovery of gold.”²¹ The “new” land had a great deal of promise. Canada was still a land of opportunity and contained places free from the control of civilization.

Canadians had trouble with the idea of being “Canadian,” and this was especially true where culture was concerned. As Ryan Edwardson points out, Canada has a “geographically diverse population of multiple founding peoples, ethnic enclaves, and disparate regional identities.”²² Canadians were unsure of which vision of Canada to support. Roberts was one of many Canadian expatriates who had gathered in New York and London to practise their art. The culture industry in Canada was dominated by these larger cultural centres. Canada was still feeling out its place in the world, and trying to understand the new status of “Dominion.” The country used British passports, money, and flag. It was difficult in the years immediately following Confederation for Canadians to understand the shift from colony to dominion.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 100.

²¹“Unexplored Canada,” *The Times*, Feb 18, 1896.

²² Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 9.

Canadians were still mired in what A. B. McKillop calls “the colonial mindset.” Canadians believed that they lived on the edge of civilization in a place where people did not devote themselves to the life of the mind.²³ The colonial mindset caused Canadians to think of themselves as a part of a transatlantic cultural community, but downplay the creativity within their own borders.

Roberts’s nationality seemed to be very important to the editors of *The New York Times*. According to Robert Darnton, “One could learn a great deal about attitudes toward books and the context of their use by studying the way they were presented—the strategy of the appeal, the values invoked by the phrasing—in all kinds of publicity, from journal notices to wall posters.”²⁴ When the newspaper introduced its line up of short stories for the month of June in 1896, the authors included “the well-known Canadian writer, Charles G.D. Roberts.”²⁵ Roberts was the only author whose country of origin was mentioned. This could be explained by the fact that he was the only non-American, non-British writer. The newspaper claimed that their summer line-up contained the top stories from the foremost authors of the day. While animal stories had yet to take off as a genre, Roberts had achieved some measure of success as a writer of stories set in nature. *The New York Times* continually mentioned the fact that Roberts was Canadian and even during his long tenure in New York his name was always joined with a reminder of his native land.²⁶ This trend continued in *The New York Times*. In a review of Roberts’s poetry, for example, Joel Benton claims that “His ‘New York Nocturnes and Other Poems’ seem to bring

²³ A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, 32.

²⁴ Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette*, 126.

²⁵ “Display Ad 27 -- No Title,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1896, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/95355279/130D94F70283E839D00/1?accountid=9894> (accessed march 19, 2011).

²⁶ Joel Benton, “Six Books of Verse,” *New York Times*, Sep 17, 1898, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/95628114/130D95728F711D3AF30/25?accountid=9894> (accessed March 19, 2011).

with their burden the crispness and clarity of the northern sky.”²⁷ The only one of Roberts’s titles that was based in New York was nevertheless filled with the natural wonders of Canada, according to the critics in New York.²⁸

For Roberts’s audience, all of his stories contained the wonder and majesty of the Canadian wilderness. *Barbara Ladd*, a novel released in 1902 and set in the woods of Maine, was accused of really being based in the woods of New Brunswick. The critics claimed that there was no difference in description between earlier works set in the woods of New Brunswick and the American scenes in *Barbara Ladd*.²⁹ While these criticisms could easily be dispelled with a glance at any map of the region, the wildernesses touch each other. It was clear that Canada was what people chose to see in the works of Roberts. All of the trademarks of a Roberts nature story are present in *Barbara Ladd*: the woods are filled with curious animals, and the men possess “woodcraft.” The only real difference was that the story dealt with the history of Maine, but in a very Canadian way. *Barbara Ladd* became Roberts’s most popular full length work.

International readers saw Canada in all Roberts’s writing. The audience in New York and London saw Canada as a wild land filled with wild creatures and rustic, backwoods people. Even when writing about the urban environment the people saw the freshness and clarity of the northern sky. The identity that “the father of Canadian literature” was creating for himself owed a great deal to the impressions people had of Canada. As his first collections of stories published after *Wild Animals I have Known* started to hit the shelves in 1899, people turned increasingly to Roberts. Lamson Wolfe & Company had already predicted in October of 1898, in the “The

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ W.J. Keith, Charles G.D. Roberts, 73.

Autumn Outlook” section of the *New York Times*, that Roberts would be one of their big money makers for the year.³⁰

At the height of the popularity of animal stories, which coincided with his time in New York, Roberts dressed and acted like the average New York freelance writer; yet people never saw the author as an urbanite. Many editors believed in Roberts’s backwoods identity, because of the outdoor activities he engaged in, including outings called “campfire dinners” at the finest New York restaurants with other practitioners of the animal story.³¹ The stories were very important to the publishers. They wanted tough, masculine animals fighting for their lives. Roberts created the wilderness that people wanted to believe was real. The constant fight for survival fit right into the antimodern vision of nature as a testing ground for masculinity. However, the people were not about to let just anyone tell them about nature. The editors had to find people whose knowledge of the natural world was not going to be questioned, so they turned to Roberts, who, despite living in the most advanced city in the Americas, was able to maintain his antimodern rural identity.

Bliss Carman and Charles G.D. Roberts were cousins, roughly the same age, and both writers had left Fredericton to seek better opportunities in New York. The cousins had similar incomes, although most of Roberts’s money went to supporting two households. The cousins wore similar clothes, and were educated at the same collegiate school. Both befriended their teacher, George Parkin. The boys graduated from that school and went on to attend the University of New Brunswick. Carman left for New York first, but when the friends were reunited in 1897 they shared an apartment. Their poetic styles were very similar, and while time

³⁰ “The Autumn Outlook,” *The New York Times*, October 8, 1898, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/95637577/130D96B820BB0185C4/194?accountid=9894> (Accessed March 19, 2011).

³¹ Ernest Thompson Seton to Charles G.D. Roberts, New York, August 12, 1905, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

has seemed to place Carman ahead of Roberts in the world of poetry, contemporaries held them both in high esteem.

One area where these two writers seem to diverge was in people's perceptions of them. In 1939, critic and editor, Howe Martyn wrote an article for the *New York Times* in which he described the Canadian literary scene. Most of the writers mentioned were stationed in New York, or London, yet the literary scene was discussed by region. The section on the Maritimes provinces started with a discussion of the two cousins: Carman, who had been swallowed up by New York, and Roberts, who was still a product of the Tantramar marshes and in tune with the backwoods of Canada.³² Roberts had managed to hold on to his backwoods identity while so many Canadian writers, including his cousin, were now viewed as New Yorkers. Roberts was able to build his image as an urban backwoodsman and promote himself as an expert on nature.

The publishers believed that Roberts was an outdoorsman and wilderness expert. In a rejection letter from 1932, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* reminisced about his previous dealings with Roberts during the heyday of the animal story. Ellery Sedgwick, editor from 1907-1938, recalled Roberts's "old woody step" and confessed, "I always thought that you had come to my office straight out of the forest."³³ This seems an odd assessment of the situation in light of Roberts's constant presence in New York literary circles during this time, along with his preference for three piece suits and wire rimmed glasses. During his years in New York when he would have been visiting the *Atlantic Monthly* offices, he looked more like a lawyer than a lumberjack.³⁴ The impression he left had to have come from his comportment and not his

³² Howe Martyn, "The Literary Scene in Canada," *The New York Times*, July 2, 1939, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/102954645/130D95F4C1141F7BD22/74?accountid=9894> (accessed March 19, 2011).

³³ Ellery Sedgwick to Charles G.D. Roberts, New York, May 12, 1932, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB.

³⁴ John Coldwell Adams, *Sir Charles God Damn*, 73.

appearance. The “old woody step” described by Sedgwick is a hard-to-define quality. Most Roberts’s acquaintances describe him as active and jovial. Perhaps this woody characterization comes from the folksy anecdotes that Roberts told at dinner parties and other interactions with American colleagues. James Polk, in his study of nature writers, *Three Nature Writers*, discusses Roberts’s perpetuation of myths about Canada at dinner parties and amongst friends in New York. The author would regale his listeners with tales of feeding polar bears from his hand and claim that he only wore the fancy middle-class clothing so as not to frighten the urbanites with the trappings of a backwoodsman.³⁵ The nature writer seems to have enjoyed this pose. The dinner parties and meetings with editors were a part of the success Roberts had as a writer and his image as a woodsman.

It would be unfair to claim that Roberts rode on Seton’s coat tails. The two men were both considered to be masters of the animal story. Seton’s accounts were more scientific than those produced by other animal writers, but it was Roberts’s stories that contained a truly literary quality. The writers also shared a similar outlook on the natural order of the world, as George Altmeyer explains, both men believed in a Darwinian understanding of nature, in which the barriers between man and nature do not exist.³⁶ Roberts’s biographers, Elsie Pomeroy and John Coldwell Adams, both describe the relationship between Roberts and Seton as one of mutual respect and co-operation. The biographers mention that many of Roberts’s animal stories came from examining Seton’s personal library of field studies, and zoological texts. Roberts reciprocated by trying to help Seton with his prose. In a letter to Roberts in June, 1900, Seton

³⁵ Jim Polk, *Wilderness Writers: Ernest Thompson Seton, Charles G.D. Roberts, Grey Owl* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1972), 100.

³⁶ George Altmeyer, “Three Ideas of Nature in Canada,” 110.

told Roberts that he had incorporated the former's suggestions into his latest collection.³⁷ The two Canadian writers enjoyed each other's works and both men believed in the scientific basis of their work. While Roberts wrote about all types of animals, reader's tastes demanded that the stories focus on the brutal and savage aspects of nature. Stories written about certain domesticated animals did not have the same appeal as those involving ferocious predators.

The publishers knew their readers were looking for stories about the savage wilderness, the subject of so much attention when the first of Roberts's stories were released. The master of the animal tale found this out later in his career when he tried to sell a story about a Persian cat vacationing at its owner's cottage. "Tabitha Blue, or the Indiscretions of a Persian Cat" eventually became the lead story for Roberts's final collection of short stories, *Eyes in the Wilderness*, published in 1933. Roberts still had enough creative control to push for this, even though the story was rejected by almost every magazine.³⁸ The story follows a *Call of the Wild* format: a domesticated animal finds itself in natural surroundings and ancient feelings are awakened inside the soul of the beast. When the lead character is a dog the story becomes a timeless classic. Unfortunately for Roberts, Miss Tabitha Blue did not have the same appeal as Jack London's Buck. The kitty did not possess the manly feeling the audience was seeking.

The "cat story," as many publishers came to call it, had the antimodernist message of rejuvenation in the woods, and it was not his first story involving domesticated animals. Paul R. Reynolds, Roberts's literary agent in New York, returned the story with an apologetic letter to the master of the animal tale. Reynolds congratulated Roberts saying that the author had not lost his touch with regard to describing the natural landscape. The problem was that this particular

³⁷ Ernest Thompson Seton to Charles G.D. Roberts, New York, August 12, 1905, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

³⁸ John Coldwell Adams. *Sir Charles God Damn*, 161.

yarn lacked the edge of a characteristic Roberts nature tale.³⁹ While this was Reynolds's assessment of the situation, "Tabitha Blue, or the Indiscretions of a Persian Cat," did include many of the traditional elements of a Roberts story. The rich landscape is described in beautiful detail. The protagonist runs through the woods hunting and fishing. The story culminates in a battle between two animals, in this case a cat and a porcupine, and while both survive the fray the cat is wounded.⁴⁰ Reynolds explained that, "...the stories of yours in the past which I sold were about wilder animals and were more dramatic."⁴¹ Dogs, cows, chickens, and other domesticated beasts had, however, all been the stars of successful Roberts stories. "Jim the Backwoods Police Dog" takes up most of the pages in the 1918 collection, *The Ledge on Bald Face*. The main character, "Jim," is a mutt that has been trained as a police dog in a backwoods settlement. Jim is an obedient dog that saves a boy from a gang of thugs trying to collect a ransom.⁴² While Jim is a much more masculine animal character, he is by no means "wilder" than the Persian cat. Roberts's audience expected a much more masculine animal to drive the story.

Jim the police dog is a masculine character, he is big, strong, and courageous, and Roberts describes him in a very romantic light. The dog is a mixture of three large breeds: a Newfoundland, a rescue dog, a Bloodhound, a tracking dog, and an Old English sheepdog, a guard dog. All these traits come into play as the story unfolds. Jim is even a member of dog

³⁹ Paul R. Reynolds to Charles G.D. Roberts, New York, April 19, 1932, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

⁴⁰ Charles G.D. Roberts, "Tabitha Blue, or the Indiscretions of a Persian Cat," in *Eyes in the Wilderness* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1933), 25.

⁴¹ Paul R. Reynolds to Charles G.D. Roberts, New York, April 19, 1932, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

⁴² Charles G.D. Roberts, "Jim the Backwoods Police Dog," in *The Ledge on Bald Face* (London: Ward, Lock & Company Ltd., 1918), 100.

aristocracy as his father is a pedigreed sheepdog. The story is clearly about an animal but one that possesses the chivalric characteristics of bravery, loyalty, and dignity.

Jim is not the only masculine animal character, since many of Roberts's lead characters in the stories possess manly traits that appealed to the reader's desire to express his own repressed masculinity. "Cock-Crow," a short story released in *The Ledge on Bald Face*, is the story of a proud game cock that struts through the forest fending off a hawk, a fox, and a weasel before earning the respect of a backwoodsman.⁴³ The brave wild rooster is never phased by any threat to his life, "He had escaped by miracle, but little effect had that upon his bold and confident spirit."⁴⁴ When the rooster defeats the hawk in battle, he "Crowed long and shrill, three times, as if challenging any other champions of the wilderness to come and dare a like fate."⁴⁵ The swagger of the game cock is easily comparable to that of the human male. While Roberts claimed repeatedly that he was not anthropomorphizing his animals he describes, their attributes and behaviours are very similar to those of their human counterparts.

Readers have often turned to literature to fulfill fantasies and to experience sensations that they are not getting from reality. Michael Kimmel, writing about adventure novels, states that turn-of-the-century men were "...consuming their manhood in idealized versions of those settings..." Kimmel was referring to the settings of home and work. Men were turning to literature to reclaim the "traditional" masculinity they believed they had lost. The "traditional settings" of home and work were thought to now be unmaking men instead of providing them with the identity and security they needed. The literature described these settings in idealized terms that glorified the "manly" past.⁴⁶ Kimmel uses the example of *Moby Dick*, in which a man

⁴³ Charles G.D. Roberts, "Cock-Crow," in *The Ledge on Bald Face* (London: Ward, Lock & Company Ltd., 1918), 37.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 155.

competes against the power of nature and is ultimately destroyed by it. Roberts's stories operated in a similar way as they portrayed a world in which a man could do manly things. Kimmel also saw the whale as representative of male desire and penis envy.⁴⁷ One can only wonder what power a character like the game-cock would have over an audience of men looking for adventurous woodland characters.

This adventurous woodland was the vision of nature publishers were looking for, and also the vision of nature people wanted to believe. People believed that Roberts was a backwoodsman because he was giving the people the wilderness they wanted. The landscape that the author painted with his pen was beautiful. With stillness, wonder, and eyes carefully trolling for danger, the natural world of Roberts was alive with action. The antimodern reader needed to be invigorated by his books. He was, after all, warding off the social ills of the industrialized world, or at very least, sublimating his desire to get outside. The reader needed authentic experience. Editors, and audiences, turned to Roberts because he was the urban backwoodsman.

The reader is not a passive actor on which the author imposes his message, but possesses a great deal of agency in the literary process. Roberts's rise to prominence as a writer of animal stories was the result of his readership's demand for nature. However, it is not only through indirect control exerted by participation in a market economy that the reader affects a written work. The story is created by the interaction of the reader with the printed word. The meaning of a literary work is therefore impossible to determine by merely looking for what the author is trying to communicate; the reader's imaginative faculties determine the message that is

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

received.⁴⁸ The words are given meaning through the process of reading. This experience is what Wolfgang Iser calls, “a dynamic happening.”⁴⁹ The words are brought to life through the reader. “As text and reader thus merge into a single situation, the division between the subject and object no longer applies, and it therefore follows that meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an effect to be experienced.”⁵⁰ This ethereal quality of literature allowed Roberts’s audience to escape the city and lose themselves in the backwoods, “In reading we are able to experience things that no longer exist and to understand things that are totally unfamiliar to us...”⁵¹ Readers needed to believe that Roberts was transmitting knowledge of the wilderness through his books.

These repressed woodsmen turned to the wilderness created in the animal stories for escape and therapeutic rejuvenation. For assistant scout master Ben E. Ferrichs of St. Louis, Missouri, the stories “...wake in me some spark of my prehistoric ancestor.”⁵² The twenty year-old city dweller fell in love with Roberts’s writings after reading “The Den of the Otter” in *Liberty* magazine.⁵³ The young reader connected with the character Joe Birch, the human observer of the otter’s activities. Ferrichs sublimated his desire to be in the woods through this story, and states this explicitly in his letter: “... I live in a large city and find it impossible to get in the open as much as I would like I must be content with dreams and the writin [written] experiences of others.”⁵⁴ The stories provide catharsis for the wearied urban dweller. The word “experiences” is interesting, as it reinforces Keith’s assertion that Roberts’s position of authority

⁴⁸ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵² Ben E. Ferrichs to Charles G.D. Roberts, St. Louis, November 25, 1935, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

is important for the reader's enjoyment of the stories. Ferrichs was also involved with the Boy Scouts and loved to get out into the real wilderness as often as possible.

Readers also felt drawn towards certain animals over others. Ralph Thompson, a writer for the *New York Times* book section, claimed that "foxes have always been a lot closer to this local seeker than he has ever been to foxes."⁵⁵ While Thompson had never encountered a fox in the wild, he had grown close to the animals through literary depictions. *Red Fox*, Roberts's novel released in 1905, was Thompson's first fictional encounter with a fox and the book affected the young man so much that, "he got practically by heart and parts of which he could even today, twenty odd years later, quote if pressed."⁵⁶ At the time when he wrote the article, Thompson still headed out to the woods in search of foxes. The stories had inspired him in his youth and this connection allowed him to develop a kinship, if a trifle one-sided, with the creatures that the everyday New York atmosphere did not provide.

The stories of Ferrichs and Thompson illustrate the role that Roberts's stories played in the lives of many of his readers. The men were experiencing what Wolfgang Iser calls "...the real, the fictive, and the imaginary." Iser envisions the text as a combination of real and fictive elements combine to give form to the imaginary world created in the reader's mind.⁵⁷ The reader's perception of reality and the events of the text are combined. The readers, believing Roberts to be an authority, accept the fictional world he is creating as one based in the realm of possibility. According to Iser, the author takes cultural, historical, and scientific fields of reference out of reality and inserts them into the text. This act of fictionalizing is a restructuring

⁵⁵ Ralph Thompson, "Books of the Times," *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1938, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore, ML: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 2.

of the given order of each referential system.⁵⁸ The mixture of the real and fictive elements created real sensations for these two men. The act of reading served to sublimate and inspire the desire for contact with the natural world, Ferrichs dreaming of watching otters play and Thompson out in the bush in search of foxes, both men in the comfort of their own living room.

Many scholars have tried to define the aspects of the Canadian animal stories that made them stand out as a distinctive genre. These critics have attempted a thematic analysis of the animal story. However, these critics have based their inquiry on the attitudes of the post “nature faker” controversy reader and not in the excitement, or context of the scientific debates of 1890s. Margaret Atwood claims, in her book *Survival*, that the Canadian animal story is characterized by the victimization of the animal protagonists. Atwood saw the characters as hopeless, “Seton and Roberts rarely offer their victims even a potential way out.”⁵⁹ James Polk corroborates this position by claiming that the stories of Roberts and Seton featured the brutality of nature.⁶⁰ The Canadian as represented in these stories is a victim of American aggression, or British ambivalence. However as we have seen above, the leading animal characters were not always victims. Many of these characters carry themselves with the self assured swagger that these same critics believed were predominant in American literature. In trying to find representations of Canadians in Roberts’s animal characters, Atwood and Polk were starting their analysis from the assumption that anthropomorphism was Roberts’s intention.

Audience is a difficult topic to study with regard to any writer, and it is essential to understanding Roberts. George Altmeyer in his article, “Three Ideas of Nature in Canada, 1893-1914,” explores different conceptions of nature in Canada. Altmeyer believed that Roberts’s

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁹ Margaret Atwood, *Survival* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), 75.

⁶⁰ James Polk, *Wilderness Writers*, 108.

stories were based in a Darwinian view of nature.⁶¹ However all of Altmeyer's views of nature can be found in Roberts's work: nature the rejuvenating force, nature as a finite resource, and nature as a source of the divine. The animal story was tackling the main, nature-related controversies of this period. People from all sides of these arguments would have gravitated towards these books. To understand them as merely "literary" undercuts the weight they held in the minds of their audience. For Ferrichs and Thompson, the stories affected their relationship with nature and animals. These factors did not matter to the literati in Canada who were seeking a solid wooden base for their literary canon.

The animal story did not carry much weight in literary circles after 1907. The stories were no longer considered to be based in science and the genre was thought of as childish. However, in the 1890s, when the stories of Seton and Roberts were still fresh, adult audiences were gripped by the "reality" they were reading. Yet as this style of animal story became familiar to the reading audience it was relegated to grade school readers and cheap reprints for children. In his book *Charles G.D. Roberts*, W.J. Keith explains that this designation of children's literature is the reason that the Canadian literati focused on his poetry and not his extensive prose work.⁶² The legacy left by Roberts was marred by the fact that his animal stories were not considered to be a significant enough contribution to Canadian literature to warrant further study. While actually quite good in its own right, his poetry does not have the enduring quality found in Blake, Emerson, or even Carman. The prose works are the true legacy of Roberts. It was his prose that established Roberts's reputation as an internationally acclaimed writer.

⁶¹ George Altmeyer, "Three Ideas of Nature in Canada," 110.

⁶² W.J. Keith, *Charles G.D. Roberts*, 119.

This statement may seem to ignore Roberts's own belief that poetry was the art form, while the rest of his writing simply paid the bills. The international reputation was what made the writer such a huge star in Canada. By 1901 Roberts was a recognised author. He had released two collections of poetry, and two collections of short stories. Most of the stories had first been released in magazines. Several works of his non-fiction had appeared. The Boston publishing house, Small, Maynard & Company, released Roberts's story, "The Red Oxen of Bonval," as a part of a contest book *The House Party*. Contestants were provided with a card containing the names of ten popular authors. The stories in the book were unmarked. The first person to mail in a card matching the stories to the authors received \$1000. The introduction to the contest claimed that the average reader should be able to recognise the styles of these authors. Roberts's own contribution was easy to find, since it was the only story centred on animal life. The book included many other popular short story writers of the day: Mark Twain, Thomas Bailey Alderich, and Owen Wister.⁶³ Roberts was a part of this elite group and the Canadian literary community turned to Roberts for guidance in building credibility for the nascent literary scene.

⁶³ *The House Party* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1901), Contest application page.

Chapter 3

The Backwoodsman

The backwoodsman was a character type developed by Roberts. The character was a strong man who understood the woods. The masculinity exhibited by this character is a mixture of the rough and respectable masculine cultures of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. He was strong, rugged and of little means, but he was in control of the world around him. This character was influenced by other writings and genres of the day; however, in this character we can find Roberts's views on Canadian masculinity.

Roberts believed that he was an outdoorsman in the same league as these characters and he had fans, publishers, and critics believing that he was an expert on the wilderness. He would often start letters to his editors with a sentence like, "on my return from a camping expedition into the wilds..."¹ This was often his excuse for a delayed reply to a letter.² Critics also believed that he was an expert on life in the woods. A book critic with the *New York Times* believed that Roberts was "not only familiar with the outdoor life, but with the rude, toiling men who people sparsely those wild forest places."³ The article claimed that if the reader wanted to familiarize himself with this world, he should read *Earth's Enigmas*. People, including Roberts himself, saw the writer in this role as a master of the woodland realm. In order to understand Roberts and his version of Canadian masculinity we have to understand the backwoodsman.

The late nineteenth century witnessed a drastic shift in popular culture as the adventure novel began to take over from the high drama of Dickens and Trollope as the most popular

¹ Charles G.D. Roberts to James Burt Best, in *The Collected Letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 226.

² *Ibid.*

³ "Collections of Short Stories," *The New York Times*, Jun 5, 1897, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/95482027/130D96B820BB0185C4/23?accountid=9894> (accessed March 19, 2011).

genre. According to Nick Mount, this trend, dubbed the “new Romance movement,” was first identified by Bliss Carman: “For Carman, the main features of what he called the new Romance movement were its ‘strong, self-assured, manly outlook upon life’”⁴ Novels about tea parties and high society were losing favour to the novels of Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Joseph Conrad. The audience was looking for manly men engaged in manly activity. Turn-of-the-century men, Michael Kimmel notes, were, “...consuming their manhood in idealized versions of those settings...” They were turning to literature to reclaim the “traditional” masculinity they believed they had lost. The “traditional settings” of home and work were thought now to be unmaking men instead of providing them with the masculine identity and security they needed. Men were attempting to find characters through which they could live vicariously. The literature therefore described these settings in idealized terms that glorified the “manly” past.⁵ The romantic literature that was being published helped to create this mythical golden age of men.

One of Roberts’s most fascinating character types was the backwoodsman: strong, intelligent, and intuitive, the man of the northern woodlands that had mastered the ways of nature. The character was the embodiment of the values of the new romanticism. Many critics have looked for Roberts’s position on our national character in the symbolism of his animal protagonists. The author’s statement about Canadian manhood can be found, plain as day, in the men that he portrayed throughout his prose works. These human characters dominated the pages of Roberts’s short stories. Honest and true, strong and courageous, the backwoodsman was a gentleman of the Northern woodlands. The backwoodsman has chosen the purity of nature over the corruption of civilization. He reflects Roberts’s antimodernist philosophy since he does

⁴ Nick Mount, *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 98.

⁵ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 155.

not stand in opposition to technology and advancement yet he escapes from the sickness and corruption of the industrial society. Female characters rely on the backwoodsmen to provide and care for them. Unfortunately, the backwoodsman was not able to secure the same level of popularity as the Cowboy characters of Owen Wister and Zane Grey.

The backwoodsman was a mixture of British mores and Canadian hardiness, the perfect hero for the New Romance. This was the image of Canadian masculinity that many middle-class Canadians had been attempting to establish. Gillian Poulter's book *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture, & Identity in Montreal, 1840-85*, deals with Colonel William Rhodes, and the photographer William Notman, who in 1866 set out to capture an image of Canadian masculinity. Notman designed a photo shoot using hunting as the theme, in order to highlight the northern masculinity of the subject Rhodes.⁶ Although they used different mediums, Roberts's conception of the backwoodsman is very close to the image created by Notman and Rhodes. The stories of Roberts and Notman's photos were trying to show the English-Canadian man as the master of the wilderness. The image created in 1866 was of the Colonel dressed in furs, rifle in hand, and surrounded by subservient native guides.⁷ This was the national narrative that these men were trying to create. The English-Canadian man was conquering the forces of nature.

The backwoodsman was Roberts's vision of the Canadian man. Margret Atwood claims that the major theme in Canadian literature has been one of survival. She sees this in the animal victims of Roberts's stories. What she fails to understand is the nature of Roberts's animal stories. Roberts was not attempting to create an anthropomorphic world nor allegorical tales in

⁶ Gillian Poulter, *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture, & Identity in Montreal, 1840-85* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 66.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

which animal high jinks were put on display in order to relate some deeper meaning about human society. He sincerely believed that the nature he was writing about was the real article. While clearly survival plays a big part in Roberts's animal stories, he was not trying to show national character in his animal protagonists. Roberts did not see Canadians as victims. He saw Canada as a potential powerhouse on the world stage. Roberts still believed in the unity of the British Empire and Canada's leading role in that organization.

The problem with this theory is that Atwood, Frye, and Polk do not take Roberts's worldview into account. The Imperial nationalism espoused by Roberts did not present such a dismal view of Canada's place in the world. In *The Sense of Power* Carl Berger claims that Imperialism was a type of nationalism, "...a type of awareness of nationality which rested upon a certain understanding of history, the national character, and the national mission."⁸ We were not a small nation struggling against larger powers, but part of a thriving commonwealth that spanned the globe. While liberal nationalists and autonomists thought that the group's ideology was against nationalism, this was not true. Imperialists were filled with pride and believed that Canada had a large role to play on the world stage. The movement had very little in the way of mass appeal, "Imperial unity found no favour with the farmers or the working classes, and in French Canada it encountered indifference and hostility."⁹ The movement was primarily middle-class in nature; Imperialism's main supporters could be found in Ontario and the Maritimes, the Loyalist provinces. The group was made up of the educated elite of these provinces.

Romanticism rose to prominence toward the end of the 18th century, and its art, poetry, and literature embodied a rejection of the Enlightenment's cold rationalism, it embraced emotion

⁸ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

and experience. Northrop Frye describes the shift to Romanticism in his book, *A Study of English Romanticism*: “literature becomes less rational and more emotional, less urbanized and with more feeling for nature...”¹⁰ Roberts’s backwoodsman is in tune with nature and rejects civilization for the forest. This transition from the rational and urbanized happens in many of the backwoods tales. The back story of the character usually involves leaving a civilized environment and then learning to ignore conventional thinking and read the signs of nature. While Roberts missed Romanticism’s initial influence, that period created, “...a new kind of sensibility [that came] into all Western literatures,”¹¹ Romanticism was more than a trend, it was a new way to look at the world, it never completely went away.

The romantic writing was in touch with the society in which it was developed. Stephen C. Behrendt envisions the romantic writer as half historian and half mythmaker, since the writer, “endeavoured to compose works that were at once timely-- directly relevant to contemporary events and phenomena—and timeless—apropos of the most enduring and universal aspects of human experience.”¹² Roberts’s prose works, especially his historical romances, were deeply involved in the process of mythmaking. Short stories like “The Eye of Gluskap” tied the history of the nation with the native peoples, who had lived on the site of the new nation, and their myths. The story is about a purple amethyst stone that brings bad luck to the man who possesses it, “The Indians called it the Eye of Gluskap, and believed that to meddle with it at all would bring down swiftly the vengeance of the demigod.”¹³ Of course the story was not the result of any real research into native culture, the invented lore was based in early twentieth century stereotypes regarding Native people. Laura Smyth-Groening, in her book *Listening to Old*

¹⁰ Northrop Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism* (New York: Random House, 1968), 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹² Stephen C. Behrendt, “Introduction: History, Mythmaking and the Romantic Artist,” in *History and Myth: Essays on English Romantic Literature*, ed. Stephen C. Behrendt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 16.

¹³ Charles G.D. Roberts, *By the Marshes of Minas* (Toronto: Briggs, 1900), 262.

Woman Speak: Natives and Alternatives in Canadian Literature, claims that “Euro-Canadian interpretations of native voices have locked us inside a set of binary patterns that have proven to be virtually inescapable.”¹⁴ European-Canadian writers restricted native characters, and elements, to conveying savagery, backwardness, or mysticism. Roberts’s body of work employs all of these elements. The creation of native lore provided historical roots for the fledgling nation that was separate from their British heritage. The romantic influence in Roberts work was not very new, so how do we account for Carman’s declaration of a new romanticism?

The new romanticism, with its focus on masculinity, was the result of social anxieties regarding the state of masculinity throughout the English-speaking world. The new romanticism may have been referring to dealing with the problems of the new age. John Tosh, in his book *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, describes the 1890s as the flight from domesticity as men left England for the colonies in an attempt to recapture their manly spirit.¹⁵ English men wanted a place to test their strength and avoid the stigma of effeminacy. When Roberts’s first books about men in nature were released in the mid-1890s, the Labouchere Amendment--which criminalized homosexual acts in public and private--had just been passed by the British Parliament. In his book, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writings After 1885*, Joseph Bristow claims that during this period “effeminacy became the main stigma attached to the male homosexuality in the eyes of the English society.”¹⁶ This stereotype has been firmly embedded into contemporary society, but this moment, and the subsequent arrest of Oscar Wilde, was the genesis of the association. The cause, like so many other social ills, was

¹⁴ Laura Smyth-Groening, *Listening to Old Woman Speak: Natives and Alternatives in Canadian Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 121.

¹⁵ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 172.

¹⁶ Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writings after 1885* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 2.

thought to be the ease of modern living. The belief was that these men did very little in the way of manual labour and as a result they turned homosexual.

This was not simply public outcry against homosexuality, but a legislated drive to seek out acts perceived to be sinful. The tell-tale sign was now thought to be effeminacy and this pushed publishers towards more masculine characters. The Labouchere Amendment was just one of many factors in this shift towards a more masculine literary scene. However, during this period in England it was much easier to publish works about manly men than works involving weak, effeminate ones. Publishers were driven by an audience that demanded action. According to Frank Trentmann, the last decades of the 19th century were the beginnings of an antimodern cultural revolution.¹⁷ The animal story was still Roberts's claim to fame in England, but his backwoodsman stories were very well received. British nature writing had always focused on the countryside and rural life as opposed to Thoreauesque man vs. Nature. The British people were growing weary of urban living and began to pine for their rustic heritage. This new surge of national nostalgia had a drastic effect on literary culture as men started to search for manliness in their texts and boys were encouraged to read about heroic deeds. The boy's story papers were at the height of their influence and Roberts's stories were in high demand. America was also wrestling with fears of effeminacy.

The mindset of those controlling the mediums of popular culture in the United States was shifting at the turn of the century, and people began to worry about the influence of modernity on the vitality of men. Tina Loo claims that "For antimoderns, modern life was artificial, sterile and devoid of meaning. The cure lay in finding new balance between reason and passion; a

¹⁷ Frank Trentmann, "Civilization and its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in the Twentieth-Century Western Culture," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no 4 (1994): 584.

recalibration achieved by seeking out authentic experiences in the primitive.”¹⁸ The fear was that “Over-civilized man” had lost touch with what made men the creatures they were and these men were essentially women. This recalibration is what T.J. Jackson Lears describes as the “therapeutic ethos.” The leading thinkers of the day started to tell people that they could improve their lot in life, despite the isolation that people were feeling in the crowded urban centres.¹⁹ Through “Self-help advisors, social scientists, popular literati, and the avant-garde all began to elevate becoming over being, the process of experience over its goal or result.”²⁰ In order to help people cope with the emptiness they were feeling, this “therapeutic ethos” advised those seeking fulfilment to get to the open air and start communing with nature. This was not an effort to reject modern society. The idea was that camping, hunting, and sports would create healthier people who would return to society reinvigorated and ready to work. The escapist cure that these experts were preaching was not limited to physically escaping the city. Many companies began using these notions to promote their products.

Antimodern thinking appeared in many different cultural forms, and Roberts’s stories, which people read in their homes, were thought to be a good way for men to experience the world of nature. In Roberts’s introduction to *The Kindred of the Wild*, the author claims that his stories do in fact bring men closer to the wild without having to get dirty. The solution was to get outdoors and come into contact with nature. The stories were to help those who could not get away from the urban centres, at least not as much as they would like. The limitations of time and finances caused many people to seek out mediums for indulging in vicarious masculinity.

¹⁸ Tina Loo, “Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880- 1939,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (2001): 300.

¹⁹ T.J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930,” in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880- 1980*, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

Kimmel discusses this drive to fill the void of visceral experience with fantasy: “we created new symbols, the consumption of which ‘reminded’ men of that secure past, evoking an age before identity crises, before crises of masculinity...”²¹ This imagined past was captured in the pages of Roberts’s books. The readers used these new symbols to create their own vision of a golden age of masculinity. The antidote to all these fears, and dreams, was the rustic, virile backwoodsman.

The backwoodsmen of Roberts’s wilderness have received very little attention from scholars and critics. Canadian critics looking to find a star in Canadian literature have tried to focus on the poetry and novels of Roberts as these are the formats that are most respected by the literary community. Roberts’s animal stories receive attention because of the sensation they caused during his lifetime. This is unfortunate for the Roberts legacy as some of his best works are his short stories. William J. Keith claimed that prose was where Roberts’s talent is most evident because it is not formulaic and shows creativity and originality that is not evident in his poetry.²² The genre was not scrutinized in the same way as his poetry, and the writer’s imagination was allowed to take over. Reviewers immediately recognized Roberts’s talent for describing the woodland settings, but there was a lot more to these stories than this. Like the animal stories, these human-based nature tales were developed in response to a literary trend, but through these tales the reader can get a better understanding of how Roberts saw the Canadian man.

It should not be too grand a leap to assert that the feelings Roberts had for his nation were bound up in his (human) male characters. In the period between 1871 and the beginning of the Great War, the new emphasis on nationalism tied the health of the nation to the health of its men.

²¹ Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 119.

²² W.J. Keith, *Charles G.D. Roberts* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pub. Co., 1969), 119.

In *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, George L. Mosse states that, “Masculinity stood for the image society liked to have of itself...”²³ Nations were judging their fitness as a state based on the fitness of their men. This viewpoint was a central part of the ethos of many of the organizations of the day, such as the Boy Scouts, The Legion of Frontiersmen, and the open-air movement that was spawning camping groups in the major metropolitan areas of the United States.

Roberts convinced himself that he was a part of this group and thought of himself as a woodsman. Responding to a letter of criticism, forwarded to Roberts by *The Century Magazine* after it had published “The Vagrants of the Barren,” the author asked if this critic had spent 25 years learning the ways of nature. The reader refused to believe that a hunter could catch up to a herd of caribou in the type of weather described in the story. Roberts ended the letter by saying that he would not respond to the reader who was clearly unfamiliar with the ways of the wild.²⁴ At the time, Roberts was forty years old, he had lived the majority of his life in Fredericton, N.B. and was at living in New York. Having worked as a school principal, freelance writer, and university professor, Roberts was not a member of the group he described in his stories. His characters were usually of peasant or working class origins, yet they were models of middle-class sensibility. They were full-time residents of the forest. Camping, hiking, and visiting lumber camps in his free time were his experiences in the bush. The writer had not made his living from the land, he did not have the same relationship a farmer or lumberjack would have with nature. However, he believed that his experience qualified him to be a considered woodsman.

²³ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 79.

²⁴ Roberts to Clarence Clough Buel, Dieppe, October 26, 1908, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 289.

Dave Patton, one of Roberts's male protagonists, was a prominent businessman until he went bankrupt and was forced to leave the settlements for a small parcel of land in the wilderness that was his last worldly possession. Hacking his farm out of the raw wilderness, Dave brings his sickly wife and young daughter, Lidey, out to live in the house he built with his own hands. In order to ensure his daughter's happiness on Christmas morning, Dave strikes out on his two day hike through thick snow to the settlements to buy his little girl a doll. While he is away, Dave's wife, who remains nameless, falls ill, causing Lidey to run off in search of her father. The little girl is tracked down by a pack of wolves and forced to hide in an abandoned cottage. Dave hears the wolves, and from their calls and behaviour, he can tell that they have cornered a human. Although he thinks it is some hapless native, he goes to save the person anyway. Dave grabs his axe and lunges towards the wolf pack. Once he has killed all six wolves, without injury to his person, Dave finds his daughter in the abandoned cottage. By the end of the story Dave has saved Christmas, rescued his daughter, and nursed his nameless wife back to health. This is how Charles G.D. Roberts saw the Canadian man.²⁵

The backwoodsmen did not kill needlessly or without honour. The sportsman's code that was revered among middle-class hunters in this period was a major part of Roberts's backwoodsman's treatment of nature. The battle between people who hunted for honour and those who hunted for financial gain plays out in "The Vagrants of the Barren." After losing everything he owns in a fire, Peter Noel heads off with only the clothes on his back to find the nearby lumber camp to which he often sold furs and meat. The trek is interrupted when Noel finds caribou tracks in the snow and decides that he will kill a few caribou to recoup some of his losses. The caribou nearly escape the hunter when a blinding snow storm stops the herd in its

²⁵ Charles G.D. Roberts, *The Backwoodsman* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1907), 86.

tracks. Noel, who had given up all hope of catching them, returns to the chase with renewed vigour and finds the herd despite the storm. The caribou will not move unless they can see. Noel could now kill the entire herd and make more money than he had ever dreamed. After killing the first a bull caribou, an honourable kill according to the sportsman's code, Noel turns to the rest of the herd but he realizes "It would be a betrayal."²⁶ To use these defenceless animals to recoup financial losses would be against the code of nature he lived by. As he is about to slit the animal's throat, the backwoodsman caresses its neck, and as he feels the heartbeat of the powerful animal he begins to feel compassion for his prey. Noel stops his greedy killing spree and beds down for the night with the female caribou. The hunter wakes in the morning to find only the caribou he killed remains.²⁷

This story deals with many of the issues that were being debated by sportsmen and conservationists: the condemning of pothunters--who hunted as a livelihood--in favour of sportsmen, middle class men hunting for trophies. The moral authority of sportsman's code is present in this story as the trapper learns that his business of killing is morally wrong. According to Tina Loo, in her article "Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880- 1939," the animals had to be taken using the "Sportsman's Creed." Animals needed to have a sporting chance: no shooting mothers or offspring. The male was the target, and true sportsmen were knowledgeable of the creatures' habits and how to find their proper target.²⁸ Roberts was very careful to mention that it is a bull caribou that Noel kills. It is difficult to believe that anyone in a blinding snow storm could identify the sex of a species that displays very little sexual dimorphism, but it remains important to the story in the way it indicates that

²⁶ Ibid., 33.

²⁷ Ibid., 33.

²⁸ Tina Loo, "Of Moose and Men," 307.

true sportsmen killed only the toughest, male animals. The pothunter kills females and males indiscriminately without thinking about the size of the antlers or the challenge of killing the mighty beast. This was because the pothunter was killing for survival and not trying to decorate the walls of his den.

The woodsmen in both stories kill their prey without guns. Peter Noel loses his gun in the snow and slits the throat of the bull with his knife. Dave Patton uses his axe for most of the wolf pack. Then, when he is down to only one opponent, “At the same moment, dropping the axe, Dave caught the other wolf by the throat.”²⁹ He kills the last wolf with his bare hands, driving the animal into the ground, breaking the spine of the animal, and choking the life out of the creature that had tried to eat his daughter. The significance of these actions lies in the competition between man and beast that was present in these stories. The beasts are offered a sporting chance by the hunters, as the weapons that are used are powered solely by the strength of the two men. The rifle represents a modern technology that, while clearly displaying advancement over animals, could be wielded by any human. A backwoodsman does not need modern contrivances to survive, to feed, or to defend himself in the wilderness. The last vicious blow landed by Patton reveals that, one-on-one the backwoodsman is stronger than a wolf; and as Roberts mentions earlier in the tale, these wolves are particularly large.

These characters did not merely cope with the elements: they were the unqualified masters of their surroundings. The backwoodsmen possessed a form of knowledge Roberts called “woodcraft” which allowed them to understand and interpret the sights and sound of the Canadian wilderness. In Loo’s assessment of the sportsman, “the true sportsman... relied on his brain as much as his brawn...” A number of these hunters went on to scientific careers based on

²⁹ Charles G.D. Roberts, *The Backwoodsmen*, 136.

their observations of animals.³⁰ The backwoodsmen display this same knack for observation and understanding their wild surroundings. Roberts calls this ability “woodcraft,” and to understand what this is we must look at the actions and abilities of the backwoodsmen. As Noel makes his way through the snow after losing all worldly possessions save the contents of his pockets, “his woodcraft should force the forest to render him something in the way of food that would suffice to keep life in his veins.”³¹ Noel is going to force nature to feed him. He tracks a herd of caribou in a blinding snow storm. Patton kills a wolf pack with an axe. He is also able to tell from the wolf calls, how far away they are, how close they are to their prey, and what species their prey is. The only surprise for the backwoodsman is that his daughter is the one in the shack. The backwoodsmen possess the best traits of the forest creatures: “But being a woodsman, and alert in every sense like the creatures of the wild themselves, his wits were awake almost before his body was, and his instincts were even quicker than his wits.”³² And yet the backwoodsmen were not forest creatures, “with an obstinate pride in his superiority to the other creatures of the wilderness...”³³ They are on a different plain when compared to other animals, and even other humans.

The backwoodsman is of European descent and not just a man that lives in the wilds. Natives, in Roberts’s stories, do not understand and control the wilderness in the same way as the backwoodsmen does. As Patton comes across the wolves he knows their prey is human but he knows it is not a backwoodsman: “What if it should be some half-starved old Indian, working his way into the settlement after bad luck with his hunting and his trapping!” The message we can glean from this passage is that the native’s methods are substandard. Trapping was a practice

³⁰ Tina Loo. “Of Moose and Men,” 306.

³¹ Charles G.D.Roberts, *The Backwoodsmen*, 28.

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, 25.

condemned by the sportsman's code as it did not allow the animal a "sporting" chance.³⁴ Dave regrets that he must stop his journey and save the unfortunate, "Cursing the wolves, and the Indian who didn't know enough to take care of himself..."³⁵ The natives were not masters of the wilderness, they were a part of the natural world and subject to its whims, whereas the backwoodsman could easily fend off any danger that might be present. This is an interesting, if condescending, representation of natives. Of all the character flaws attributed to natives by European literature, being unable to cope with the outdoors is not a common one. The comparison was designed to make the backwoodsman look superior. The story has no native characters, but the inference is that a native would need to be saved by a backwoodsman and knows less about survival than the backwoodsman. This helps the reader to understand just how great the power of the European backwoodsman is.

Although the backwoodsmen are usually English, the one exception is the Acadian. The Acadian backwoodsman character was a part of the genre of historical romance perhaps the best example of which was James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Acadians are different in many respects from their English counterparts; however, the Acadian backwoodsmen are still virile, capable, and intelligent. The main difference is that these men do not reject their society. In many cases they defend society from the attacks of natives and the Quebecois. These characters appear in Roberts's less popular prose form, the historical romance. While such stories are focused on the period around the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, the protagonists possess "woodcraft." The Acadian farmers are in tune with the movements and rhythms of nature. Gaspar Marchand, the young Acadian, is torn between his love for France and his

³⁴ Nancy B. Bouchier and Ken Cruikshank, "'Sportsmen and Pothunters': Environment, Conservation, and Class in the Fishery of Hamilton Harbour, 1858-1914," in *Sports History Review*, 28.1 (1997): 10.

³⁵ Charles G.D. Roberts, *The Backwoodsmen*, 132.

respect for the new English governors, and finds himself being threatened by an evil priest, the Black Abbe. The Quebecois priest and his band of Micmac warriors gather troops for an attack on an English settlement and the priest tells Marchand that he has to go with them or the savages will be set loose on his family. Gaspar goes with them to protect his mother, but as the attack starts he fights against the Micmac and tries to help the English. In the fighting, Gaspar finds a young girl who has her infant nephew in her arms, and he fights off several Micmac warriors as he gets the two helpless souls to a nearby canoe and paddles downstream to safety, thereby winning the affection of his damsel in distress. The union of course symbolized the convergence of English and Acadian cultures, which is still in evidence today in the Maritimes provinces.³⁶

These Acadian protagonists were infused with Roberts's imperialist ideals, and while they wrestled with issues of loyalty, they eventually sided with the British forces. The Acadian farmers of Roberts's stories respect the rule of law and accept the regime change of the early 1700s. The evil forces that they had to deal with came from Native tribes, the Quebecois and the Catholic Church. As Gaspar remarks to his family, "then look at us, the English ruling us, and plenty in our houses, and no misery save what Quebec and the Black Abbe make for us."³⁷ As the story plays out, Gaspar is continuously wrestling with the divided loyalties that Acadians faced. The historical romance was a popular genre at the turn of the century, and Roberts took advantage of the rich history of his home province and created wonderful tales of Acadian lore. The genre uses the term "historical" loosely, since facts were not the focus. Writers like Roberts instead relied more on conventional assumptions about the period to create their stories. The natives are bloodthirsty, the priests are part of a papist conspiracy, and the British/Americans moved north and tried in earnest to live peaceably with the Natives and the French.

³⁶ Charles G.D. Roberts. *By the Marshes of Minas*, 48.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

W.J. Keith, writing about the works of Charles G.D. Roberts, states that Roberts's collection of short stories, *By the Marshes of Minas*, was written in response to the comment that "no Fenimore Cooper has yet arisen to chronicle these tales of blood."³⁸ The stories of blood refer to the English, Acadian, and Micmac conflicts that took place after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The quote refers to a call for writing a history of the maritimes provinces. The language used in the quote implies that historical weight is applied to the genre of historical romance. The people understood that the stories were embellished accounts, but saw them as presenting a kind of truth. Keith, who believed that Roberts's prose was his most creative and ingenious form of writing, in discussing *By the Marshes of Minas*, says, "We find ourselves almost ticking off the predictable elements: a sturdy and chivalric hero, adventurous quest-journey, a villainous priest, sinister Indians (who bite the dust at regular and appropriate intervals)..."³⁹ Looking at this statement in light of the fact that people regarded this genre as containing a degree of truth the damaging effects to cultural interrelations can be seen.

Roberts's stories were a part of a long tradition of European literature that misrepresented Natives and their culture. The Micmac warriors are described in animalistic terms: "...the cruel yell of the Micmacs, wolfish, appalling rose over the sudden glare..."⁴⁰ The Natives are compared to the animals in sound but also in their actions, "his fierce black eyes fell on the bed, and with a whoop he pounced forward, scalping knife in hand."⁴¹ In this scene the Native is attacking a young woman and an infant, portraying colonizers as the victims of colonized peoples' aggression. This seems bizarre, but it is a popular theme in literature regarding the settling of North America. The animalistic descriptions establish the Natives as a lower rung on

³⁸ W.J. Keith, *Charles G.D. Roberts*, 63.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁰ Charles G.D. Roberts, *By the Marshes of Minas*, 64.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

the evolutionary ladder. Smyth Groening believes the discourse is based on the idea that “Just as a single person advanced from infancy through youth to reach adulthood, so all humankind had passed through savagery and barbarism before gaining civilization.”⁴² The Natives are viewed as a primitive people with lesser cultures, political systems, and beliefs, ideas that tie in nicely with Roberts’s devotion to Darwinian principles of evolution.

Women were often a big part of the backwoods stories and, as we can see, they are depicted as dependent on the backwoodsmen for protection and guidance. “In the Deep of the Snow” features two female characters who live in the deep woods and yet we see through the course of the story that they cannot survive on their own for more than a couple of days. Dave Patton has to return and save his womenfolk: his wife from her frailty, and his daughter from her curiosity. “The Vagrants of the Barrens” has no human female characters, however, Pete Noel does bed down for the night with a female caribou. Gaspar rescues his lady fair and woos her with his physical prowess on the battle field. All of these stories reveal interesting images of women as weak, and dependent on men. However, when trying to assess Roberts’s female characters we will look at Miranda, the main character from the full-length work *In the Heart of the Ancient Wood*.

The young girl moves with her mother from the settlement to a farm buried deep in the wilderness. Only the wily old trapper Dave Titus knows how to get to the old farm and he treks in fresh supplies to the ladies from time to time. The women fend for themselves and run their own farm. Miranda has a special gift for spotting wildlife and befriends an old she-bear named Kroof who had recently lost a cub and wanted to mother the little girl. The girl eventually befriends all the animals, except for the panthers, and she spends most of her free time in the

⁴² Laura Smyth Groening, *Listening to Old Woman Speak*, 66.

woods with them. The animals decide that since it bothers her to see death they will not kill around Miranda. The young girl and her mother are vegetarians and abhor the bear's desire to eat meat. The girl's life is turned upside down when she meets Dave's son Dave, a trapper, and he begins to teach her about the realities of nature. Miranda rejects his ideas at first, but then her mother falls ill and young Dave nurses her back to health with meat. Once Miranda's convictions have been shaken she begins to wonder if killing has a place in life. Eventually the young lady is forced to choose between these new ideas and her old way of life when Kroof attacks Dave. In the end she gives in to the trapper's worldview and also consents to marry him.

Thinking of this story in terms of an allegorical look at the contemporary era, we turn to the social context to understand what Roberts was trying say about women in this novel. Masculinity and femininity are relational categories that change over time and respond to changes in the other category. Toby L. Ditz, in her article "The New Men's History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power: Some Remedies from Early American Gender History," claims that we need to understand crises in masculinity not just as a loss of confidence among men but in terms of shifts in the gendered power dynamic.⁴³ The turn of the century witnessed a crisis in masculinity and conversely saw women stepping out and fighting for political rights and equality. Even Canada was witnessing this phenomenon, although on a smaller scale, first-wave feminism was a reality in the English speaking world. On the surface Miranda is a strong female character who, with her mother, survives the harsh life of the forest. She is living in a man's world, however. Miranda is being protected from harsh reality by the society, in this case an animal society, she lives in. While she is physically fit and able to work on the farm, she comes to realize that she cannot survive without the help of a man.

⁴³ Toby L. Ditz, "The New Men's History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power: Some Remedies from Early American Gender History," in *Gender & History* 16, no. 1 (April 2004): 10.

Miranda's vegetarianism is also a problem in the story as her mother has to return to meat in order to survive. The vegetarian diet of the women illustrates their reluctance to kill the animals of the forest. Through the course of the story her ideas are proven to be wrong. This could be Roberts's assessment of the ideas of the women's movement, especially their pacifism. Either way, the man's worldview wins out and the women see the error of their ways. Through the course of the story Miranda's mother's attitude completely changes. At first she rejects the evils of the settlement and eating meat, yet by the end she is wishing that she had raised her daughter back in civilization so that Miranda would be more of a lady. Her upbringing in the forest has made Miranda into a tomboy running through the forest in pants, working in the fields, and not at all interested in marriage. When Miranda is finally convinced of the error of her ways she consents to become a woman and has to return to the settlements with Dave to learn how to live the life of a housewife. To understand what this says about Dave Titus, we turn again to Ditz, who explains that, historians "can attend to men's uses of the symbolic woman as they attempt to stabilize the differences and similarities amongst men..."⁴⁴ Dave is a virile man who tamed the self-confident, wild woman. The story illustrates that nature, here representing the political and business worlds, is made for men and women cannot understand it. Femininity is vulnerable when confronted with the brutal realities of life in the backwoods.

The fate for Roberts's female characters that have spent too much time in the wilderness is that they become mannish in appearance and demeanour. Without the benefit of male protection Mrs. Gammit, from the short story "Mrs. Gammit's Pig" found in *The Backwoodsmen*, represents what happens to women who choose to stay in this man's world. The grizzled old woman has essentially changed genders as Roberts describes her as very nearly a

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

man in most regards.⁴⁵ The hard frontier life has caused the woman to lose all of her sexual appeal. Luckily Miranda escapes this fate by returning to human society and becoming a lady.

The use of female characters is an interesting place to start our comparison of backwoodsman to cowboy because both genres have similar roles for women on the frontier. The damsel in distress is a common theme and both genres contain women who get hurt trying to make it on their own in a man's world. However, Donald K. Meisenheimer Jr. claims in his article, "Machining the Man: From Neurasthenia to Psychasthenia in SF and the Genre Western," that the female characters in a western are there just to highlight the amazing things that the cowboys are doing and offer praise to their heroes.⁴⁶ This is a function that we see in Roberts's stories as well. Gaspar's damsel, Ruth, only has a few lines of dialogue in the story, but most of her words are used to praise the valiant actions of her he-man. Miranda offers us a different position as she spends most of her time fighting Dave's influence and saves him from predators three times during the course of the novel. While the damsel in distress is not the only female character type, they all in some way need a male.

The similarities in the Cowboy and Backwoodsman characters are not surprising, for they come out of the same period. Owen Wister immigrated to the United States from Great Britain as a grown man and fell in love with the American West. Wister's *The Virginian*, first released in 1890, created the archetypal cowboy that became fodder for so many dime store novels and campy Hollywood films. The cowboy in his novel is a man from Virginia who had headed west to work on the cattle ranches. This hard working, tough as nails cowboy, is not the biggest man. The cowboys are tall, lean, and sinewy. Their skin is weather-beaten and their eyes are narrow

⁴⁵ Roberts, *The Backwoodsmen*, 158.

⁴⁶ Donald K. Meisenheimer Jr., "Machining the Man: From Neurasthenia to Psychasthenia in SF and the Genre Western," in *Science Fiction Studies* 24, no.3 (1997): 442.

slits, a consequence of their labours out in the elements. The narrator, a tenderfoot from the east, goes through the book in a state of awe and wonder as he watches the actions of the man from Virginia. The cowboy often rejects the evil ways of society without leaving it. He walks through the society and yet is not a part of it.⁴⁷

The Virginian is dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt, for both men were great lovers of nature, and “recovered effeminates,” who now wrote about the life that saved them. Roosevelt and Wister both used nature to cope with the effects of overcivilization. Wister, a former bank teller, had been diagnosed with neurasthenia before he set off in search of the western experience. At the beginning of his political career in State of New York, Roosevelt was considered to be a dandy by his peers. He had led a sheltered upper class life and so headed for the Dakotas to become a rancher and began to write stories about his hunting and outdoorsmanship, recreating himself as a cowboy.⁴⁸ Roberts never dealt with these problems as he grew up in close contact with nature. Roosevelt and Wister set out as men to find the idealized manly vitality they believed they lacked. For Roosevelt the stories he wrote about his adventures were based on the cowboy adventure stories he had read as a boy that had captured his imagination and cemented in Roosevelt’s mind the qualities of manliness.⁴⁹

In the end, the backwoodsman was never able to achieve the same level of fame as his American counterpart. Perhaps the people could not understand the backwoodsman’s obedience to the rule of law or his simple lifestyle. The character also lacked the inner torment that plagued so many cowboys. Yet the backwoodsman does provide insight into the fears, desires and attitudes of the middle-classes across the English-speaking world. Men were afraid of what they

⁴⁷ Owen Wister, *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains* (Toronto: Morang, 1906), 12.

⁴⁸ Gail Bedermann, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 170.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

had become. Women were becoming more powerful in the society and men believed that this was taking away from their power. George M. Beard writing in 1882 believed that “the mental activity in women” was one of the leading causes of neurasthenia, a nervous system disorder, in men.⁵⁰ The treatment of natives required racial stereotypes be used as points of comparison with the backwoodsman. While the stories dealt with many of the key issues of the day, the middle-class values that the character espoused ultimately did not resonate with the average Canadian. This “disconnect” between the men attempting to create a Canadian culture and the rest of the population hurt the marketability of Canadian characters. The working classes in Canada, who may or may not have loved the empire, associated more closely to the rough masculinity portrayed in the hard-fighting, hard-drinking cowboy.

Literature experienced a romantic revival in the early twentieth century, especially among Canadian writers, and Roberts was one of the leaders of this movement. Roberts’s backwoodsman stories were examples of the part-historian, part-mythmaker function of romantic writing. The young nation was looking for an identity and this might be the reason that so much of the writing coming out of the Confederation poets and other Canadian writers had a romantic feel. According to Ryan Edwardson, one of the only lasting effects of the Canadian literature of this period was the connection that was built between Canadian men and the woods.⁵¹ The backwoodsman may not have had the lasting popularity of the cowboy, but the character helped to create a Canadian identity. To this day Canadians, some who have never left the city, believe that they live in a nation of hearty woodsmen. The myth has been modified now to deal with the fact that Canada is now mostly urban. The nation of weekend cottagers is the original myth

⁵⁰George M. Beard, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequenses* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1881), vi – xvi.

⁵¹Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 15.

much diluted but Canadians have retained the connection to nature as a part of our national identity.

While we still hold on to this idea of Canada as a nation of outdoorsmen, few writers have captured the country with the same romantic enthusiasm as Roberts. According to Damian Walford Davies the romantic artists, and their texts, were heavily involved in the histories of the societies in which they were produced.⁵² The intertextuality contained in these writings provides scholars with a great deal of insight into the past. Roberts's backwoods tales can tell us a lot about the middle-class English-Canadian vision of Canada. Much like Notman's pictures, Roberts's image was that of the English gentlemen in furs. Perhaps there is enough distance now between colony and nation that this image no longer seems relevant. For Roberts the connection to the mother country was very strong. In the next chapter the extent of his commitment to the idea of Imperial federation will become evident, as well as his vision of Canada's place in that union. The image of a man in the woods remains a part of Canada's identity: Canadians live in an urban setting, but imagine their country as a nation of woodsmen.

⁵² Damian Walford Davies, "Introduction," in *Romanticism, History, Historicism: Essays on an Orthodoxy*, ed. Damian Walford Davies (New York: Routledge, 2009), 10.

Chapter 4

Duty to the Empire

The importance of Roberts's military service to his career as a writer would seem to be slight if he was a writer in England or America, countries with well established pantheons of literary gods, but Roberts was from a country desperate for literary heroism. His actions tie his writing in with his service to the nation as a man of letters and a man of action. The soldier has always been a symbol of strength. It was this romantic image of the soldier draped in glory that inspired Roberts to enlist in 1914. After a brief attempt at soldiering, Roberts was assigned the job of recording the official history of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the Great War. The result was no literary masterpiece and Roberts was well aware of that. Another important part of his life illuminated by his military service was his devotion to empire and the Imperialist concept of Canadian nationalism. In attempting to study the image of Roberts it is important to fully understand his service to Canada.

Imperialism in Canada was a highly contested nationalist vision that really only caught on amongst the middle class descendents of the loyalists. For a better understanding of this movement we turn to Carl Berger's *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (1970). This unique perspective rested on two key principles that seem to be in conflict, "...an intense awareness of Canadian nationality combined with an equally decided desire to unify and transform the British Empire so that this nationality could attain a position of equality within it."¹ The Imperialist rejected the idea that being from Canada made him less a citizen of the Empire than someone living in London, England. The United Empire

¹ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 49.

Loyalists were crucial to Imperialist claims of unity as these settlers had brought this unity with them when the Americans turned against it and through a steady progression Canadians had begun acquiring all the rights of British citizens; “these Canadians regarded Imperialism as a Native product, embedded in the traditions of their country.”² The Canada First movement was the nation’s first Imperialist organization and is probably best remembered for its involvement in the Red River Rebellion, but this attests to the devotion of the movement’s adherents. The Imperialists, right or wrong, believed that they needed to protect the country and its English heritage.

Imperialism was only one of many concepts of Canadian nationalism and was of course in conflict with these other systems of thought. The Liberal-Nationalist school has represented Imperialists as a group stuck in the past: “Imperialists were constantly reminded that there must always come a time when children grow up and leave the parental home...”³ This was an unfair characterization of Imperialist thought, yet it does sum up the Liberal-Nationalist belief that Imperialists were backwards and eschewed a nationalism based on an independent Canada. French Canadian nationalism was obviously in conflict with all English Canadian nationalisms, but its adherents shared a similar basis in tradition, and a similarly confusing stance on which nation they belonged to. Imperialists and French Canadians held on to the connections from the old world, but neither would characterize itself as backwards looking. The movements saw their mission as a progression towards a new nationalism. Imperialist thought was a part of our heritage as a former colony, but also a part of a new awareness throughout Canadian society of the big part the young dominion could play on the world stage.

² *Ibid.*, 259.

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

In 1914, as Canada and Britain were headed to war, Charles G.D. Roberts and a friend, the poet Horace Boot, had rented a houseboat for the summer. As reports of war reached the companions as they sailed through a tributary of the Thames River, Roberts began to feel a call to arms. "He said his comfortable bed began to burn him—he could not sleep!"⁴ The long time Imperialist and hopeless romantic found himself drawn to the glamorous idea of battle. His King needed him. While Roberts never went to war in a military capacity, he served the war effort by breaking in horses, training recruits, and reporting the war. When Roberts did go to France, in 1916, it was as a reporter for the War Records Office. The Canadian Army, through the War Records Office, put out a daily newspaper, and Roberts was sent to the front to report on the events as they occurred. His reports are filled with the same romantic flair that coloured the pages of his books. This should not come as a surprise, since it was the reason he was assigned this job in the first place. In his final assignment as Major Charles G.D. Roberts he authored the last two volumes of the *Canada in Flanders* series, the official history of the Canadian Expeditionary Force initiated and sponsored by Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook. Roberts wrote many letters to his family while in the armed forces and they present an interesting glimpse into his thoughts. In the introduction to volume three of *Canada in Flanders*, Lord Beaverbrook speaks highly of Roberts's prose.⁵ Beaverbrook brought in many popular fiction writers to assist in creating the newspapers and other publications of the War Records Office.

The fifty-four-year-old Roberts was still in excellent shape and in October of 1914 he volunteered himself as a recruit to a group of like-minded people, The Legion of Frontiersmen. This group of former colonial adventurers was headed by fellow writer Roger Pocock. An

⁴ Elsie Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943), 421.

⁵ Lord Beaverbrook, "Introduction," in *Canada in Flanders* vol. 3, ed. Charles G.D. Roberts (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), x.

Englishman by birth, the self-appointed Commandant had moved to Canada with his family at the age of thirteen. Like Roberts, Pocock had made a name for himself as a writer and had sold many adventure stories based on his experiences on the prairies. Many of his stories were taken directly from the lives of men he had served with as a member of the North West Mounted Police. Pocock and Roberts had met previously when the former, freshly discharged from his service with the Mounties, was trying to sell his first adventure stories. Roberts, newly appointed editor of *The Week*, sat down with Pocock and according to a letter Pocock sent to his sister in England the two men got along very well.⁶ Roberts was among the first to publish the works of the young writer. After leaving the Mounties, the restless and continually broke young man served in the Boer War as part of a guerrilla warfare group. While Roberts believed that he was a Canadian, and by extension a member of the British Empire, Pocock, despite his love for the North West Mounted Police, saw himself as an Englishman. The two men shared a similar spirit and zest for the outdoors.

Roberts and Pocock both believed that the colonies had a lot to offer the war effort because of the knowledge gleaned from rough living. This was a view that imperialists in Canada and many in England shared. The founder of the Boy Scouts, Brigadier-General Robert S.S. Baden-Powell, was another man who believed that England desperately needed the knowledge that the frontier provided. The Scoutmaster looked to his experiences in South Africa as his inspiration for his movement. He also turned to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other colonial constabularies as examples of preparedness, know-how, and rugged masculinity. The General believed that English society made English men weak, and he saw that those who left England for the colonies became strong out of necessity. The Boy Scouts organization was

⁶ Geoffrey Pocock, *Outrider of Empire: The Life & Adventures of Roger Pocock, 1865- 1941* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2007), 50.

created in order to toughen the English population at home in case of an invasion.⁷ Many people agreed with this assessment and the movement rapidly spread throughout England and much of the English-speaking world. Baden-Powell had on many occasions expressed his approval for the legion of Frontiersmen. The movements developed out of similar philosophies regarding the damaging effects of modern society.

This conception of nature as a source of strength received backing from all corners of the intellectual community. Physicians reported record numbers of neurological patients, and turned to nature for a cure. “Nervousness is strictly deficiency or lack of nerve force,” wrote George M. Beard in his 1881 psychological study, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences*. It only took general observation, Beard declared, to see that the developed world had more neurological disorders than the underdeveloped nations of the world. “The chief and primary cause of this development and very rapid increase of nervousness is *modern civilization...*” Beard separates this civilization from others with five items: “steam power, the periodical press, the telegraph, the sciences, and the mental activity of women.”⁸ While the larger urban centres, according to these criteria, fit in with the developed countries, Canada was still predominantly rural, and the disease of nervousness as defined by Beard was an urban problem.

Psychology aside, there was a great deal of concern over the physical state of masculinity in the developed world. The term “sissy” was a label to be feared and by some men treated almost like a medical condition. Dr. Alfred Stille, President of the American medical Association, spoke out against sissies. Overcivilization was believed to be the cause of the

⁷ David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 234.

⁸ George M. Beard, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1881), vi – xvi.

rampant effeminacy.⁹ The “sissy,” broadly defined, was a man with little physical strength, dependant on modern comforts, and lacking in fortitude. G. Stanley Hall, the psychiatrist and peducator, caused an overnight sensation when he asserted that white children should be raised like native children because they were too soft.¹⁰ While this idea raised many eyebrows, and hurt Hall’s career, many people believed that children needed more time away from modern civilization. Many people were of the same opinion and attempted to combat this problem, especially with regards to children, by exposure to nature. The Boy Scouts, the open-air movement, and many leading educational professionals were operating under these assumptions.

Canadian Imperialists were also concerned about the welfare of boys and the strength of the nation. Their beliefs were so tied up in militarism, Berger explains, that “by the mid-1890s the Canadian imperialists were in the forefront of ... the establishment of cadet drill in the schools.”¹¹ Camping was another tool being used to save manhood, as David I. Macleod explains, what started out as little outings sponsored by youth groups became charities of their own with organizations like, the “*New York Tribune* Fresh Air Fund, and Cleveland’s ‘Fresh Air Camp and Hospital,’” these bourgeois organizations believed that working-class city boys needed to get out into the wilderness.¹² Rapid urbanization brought many rural people into contact with the cold impersonal city for the first time. This could explain the feelings of alienation that many people were experiencing, and why a return to the land was viewed as the potential cure.¹³ In the early 1900s the Boy Scouts and Frontiersmen set out to cure the nervous, and the sissies, to get Britain ready for war, and within a decade their services were needed.

⁹ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 122.

¹⁰ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 77.

¹¹ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 233.

¹² David I. Macleod. *Building Character in the American Boy*, 235.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

The Legion of Frontiersmen was not welcomed as a fully fledged unit of the British Army at the outset of the war. However, thanks to a slip up by the War Department, the frontiersmen were acknowledged as associates in protecting the Empire.¹⁴ The acknowledgment meant very little in military terms but lent credibility to their efforts. While many high-ranking officials saw these wearied colonials as amateurs, the frontiersmen still believed that the knowledge they possessed would be of value to the Empire. Roberts described the Frontiersmen in a letter to his daughter Edith: “We Frontiersmen are supposed to be ‘devils of fellows,’ because we are all backwoodsmen, or scouts, or ranchers, or old roughriders from the Boer War.”¹⁵ It is amazing to think that Roberts, the middle class professor, saw himself as a part of this group. He must have been in amazing shape to keep up with the pace of training camp, but he had a very different background from that of the average trooper. This is another example of how Roberts envisioned himself. He saw himself as a backwoodsman whose knowledge of the outdoors would be of assistance to the Empire during this latest struggle.

The frontiersmen were given the rank of Trooper, and put to work breaking in remounts for the cavalry at Swaythingly military camp in Southampton. Many of the extant letters written by Roberts were sent from this camp. Writing to his daughter, Edith Roberts, the poet describes his assignment: “We need so much squadron drill, on horses, - and we don’t have the horses as often as we need them, because as soon as they are ready they are off to the fighting line, poor beasts.”¹⁶ Breaking in horses is strenuous work, especially for a man of his advanced years; yet Roberts was proud of his work. “But I am happy at last, as I have not been since the war began, -

¹⁴ Geoffrey Pockock, *Outrider of Empire*, 72.

¹⁵ Roberts to Edith Roberts, London, September 14, 1914, in *The Collected Letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 300.

¹⁶ Roberts to Edith Roberts, Swaythingly, October 30, 1914, in *The Collected Letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 302.

because at last I am doing man's work."¹⁷ He talks about the long hours and difficult work in many of his letters home, but always with a positive tone and an air of appreciation to his regent for allowing Roberts to perform this service.

Joining the Legion of Frontiersmen must have seemed very natural to Roberts as the organization's position and guiding philosophy was so close to Roberts's own Imperialist mindset. The group believed that the colonials had a great deal of knowledge that was going to benefit the Empire in the approaching trials of war. This special place for colonials was mixed with a belief that having this knowledge the men had a duty to use it in the service of the Empire. Pocock could not be considered a Canadian Imperialist as he never really considered himself to be Canadian. Born in England, and returning to live out his days in the motherland, Pocock saw himself as a British man who had spent time in the colonies. The distinction would have to be in where the men call home, but even that is a sorry attempt to sort out British and Canadian nationalisms in this period. For Roberts the group must have fit in with his conception of Canada's place in the Empire as a valuable asset to the Crown.

Looking beyond his nationalistic pride we have to wonder why a fifty-four-year-old man would sign up for such gruelling labour. Joining the Legion shows just how deep Roberts's romanticism ran. The decision to join was about gaining immediate, first-hand visceral experience. According to Steven Cotgrove, the sociologist, "the romantic mode emphasizes the importance of immediate experience as the basis of understanding."¹⁸ Roberts's letters ring with this sentiment. The old man was excited to be around all the other troopers and to be working hard in service of the Empire. The romantic in him craved the rough life of the frontiersman and

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁸ Stephen Cotgrove, "Styles of Thought: Science, Romanticism, and Modernization," *The British Journal of Sociology* 27, no. 3 (1978): 360.

he wrote to his children that he wanted to do more. Writing to his son Douglas he expresses a belief that he was needed at the front and believes that he will be troubled if he does not engage the enemy face-to-face.¹⁹ It is not until Roberts receives word that his unit is being deployed that he begins to write letters to friend George Parkin about his desire to do “more important work.”²⁰ When his romantic dreams were intersecting with a brutal reality the aged trooper began to rethink his decision to sign-up as a lowly grunt.

Many of Roberts’s friends in England had suggested that he become an officer as the number of casualties was mounting and leadership was needed on the frontlines. Roberts’s biographer Elsie Pomeroy claimed that “...his English friends were persuading him to apply for a commission. ‘We need you,’ they urged, ‘for we are short of officers. Their sharp-shooters are killing off our officers so rapidly.’”²¹ Annotation being almost nonexistent in Pomeroy’s book, the source for this anecdote would more than likely be the former British officer himself. The then Trooper wrote to the War Office: “I am extremely fit, physically, accustomed to the roughest outdoor life, exploration and big game shooting...”²² With his work at base camp at Swaythingly, Southampton, Roberts had proven that he was extremely fit. Roberts was careful to not fill out any information that revealed his age. It was important to the fiction writer that he told the truth with the information that he did relinquish to the War Secretaries Office.²³

According to Pomeroy Roberts’s friends at the War Secretaries Office filled in these sections

¹⁹ Roberts to Douglas Roberts, West Kirby, Cheshire, May 24, 1915, in *The Collected Letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 306.

²⁰ Roberts to George Parkin, Swaythling, November 5, 1914, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 303.

²¹ Elsie Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, 243.

²² Roberts to The War Secretary, Swaythling, November 5, 1914, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 303.

²³ Elsie Pomeroy, *Charles G.D. Roberts*, 243.

themselves and made Roberts a full ten years younger.²⁴ Roberts did not lose faith in the principles of legion, but he wanted a more important position for himself.

It is fair to say that Roberts as an educated man was better suited to a higher post than that of a Trooper. The master of the animal story was still a well known writer and his books were selling very well. Roberts was after all listed in the British *Who's Who*, and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He was a published writer and a former university professor. While he served with the Frontiersmen Roberts was invited by editor and journalist Hall Caine to work on a book in support of Belgium's King. The book was to contain letters, stories, and poems, and would be sold to raise money to support the Belgian war effort. The contributors were politicians, writers, and poets whose names would draw an audience.²⁵ Caine chose to send this invitation to Roberts because the animal story was still a very popular genre in 1914. The hectic schedule at Swaythingly made it impossible for Roberts to contribute to the book. Whatever the reason, Roberts left the Frontiersmen for the British regular forces.

By December 1914 Roberts had been made a First Lieutenant in the 16th Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment. Eventually, he would be put in charge of the No7 Cadet Battalion, and, as with the remounts at Swaythingly, Roberts was in charge of breaking in the new recruits and sending them on to the front. This was very important work but very different from what he claimed he wanted to be doing. In a letter to his youngest son, Douglas, during his time at Swaythingly, Roberts wrote, "...I am coming to the feeling that it would be actual relief and blessed comfort to lie in the trench with my cheek to the rifle, & just give oneself, give oneself

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 275.

²⁵ Hall Caine to Charles G.D. Roberts, London, October 19, 1914, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

utterly, for all we stand for in this war.”²⁶ Roberts seemed to be craving the excitement of the foot soldier’s life; yet this would never become a reality, he did not go to the front as a combatant. His post with the No7 Cadets would be his last with the British Army, as he would go on to accept a commission as a Major in the Canadian Army at the end of 1916. Lord Beaverbrook offered Roberts a job writing for the Canadian War Records Office in London and he left Ireland and his cadets behind.

Lord Beaverbrook, a Canadian media mogul who was forced to flee the country for England because of his shady business dealings, held political sway on both sides of the Atlantic. A close friend and financial backer of Sir Sam Hughes, Beaverbrook was appointed to the ambiguous position of “Canadian Eyewitness,” as well as wartime publicist and archivist, by Hughes and Borden.²⁷ The designation of eyewitness was particularly irksome to the British political and military leaders as it lacked definition and had no precedents to regulate it.²⁸ Beaverbrook opened the Canadian War Records Office in January 1916, and set out to increase his role as Canada’s eye witness to the war. Beaverbrook began hiring fiction writers, both British and Canadian, to record the Canadian war effort. *The Canadian Daily Record* was a 4 page newspaper, released by the Canadian War Records Office, composed mainly of little articles from newspapers in Canada. According to an article written by Beaverbrook for the final copy of this paper, released July 31, 1919, the Canadians were the first nation to provide their fighting men with a newspaper that detailed the news from home.²⁹ Beaverbrook claimed that the most popular section was the “What Canada is Saying” section; this listed tiny snippets of

²⁶ Roberts to Douglas Roberts, London, October 4, 1914, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 301.

²⁷ Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher: The Sensational Wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie* (Toronto: Allen Lane Canada, 2010), 121.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

²⁹ Lord Beaverbrook, “Farewell address,” in *The Canadian Daily Record*, London, July 31, 1919, The Canadian War Records Office Collection, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON.

articles from across the country.³⁰ Roberts was brought in as a special correspondent and sent to France to cover Canada's efforts at the front.

Never seeing the front as a trooper, or a field officer, Roberts experienced the First World War as a correspondent. Writing to George Platt Brett, president of the Macmillan Company, from France, Roberts exclaims, "*This, here, is life...*" [Boone's italics].³¹ The camp where the Major was stationed in France was not exactly a safe haven from the war. Bombardment from long range guns and air raids were commonplace for the soldiers at Camblain L'Abbe. The excitement of the front lines, together with Roberts's passion for Empire, created some heavily romanticized articles for Canada's war time newspaper. The articles are not credited to any particular writer but the newspaper was filled with articles with titles like, "Our Boys Unequaled," which discusses the hard won victory at Cambrai in 1918.³² The previous comment does not suggest any attempted inaccuracy in the newspaper's portrayal of the events. The romantic vision merely valorizes the experiential and vigorous activities over the daily grind of battle. The paper was designed to cheer up the boys at the front and help them maintain their connection to Canada.

During his tenure at the Canadian War Records Office Roberts was chosen to finish Beaverbrook's volumes of official history. The *Canada in Flanders* series was the Major's most prestigious assignment as a Canadian officer. Lord Beaverbrook's introduction to the third volume shows glowing praise for his replacement:

I retire gladly in favour of one who has real claim to literary and historical fame... he is well known throughout the Empire for his stories of the life of the men and denizens of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Roberts to George Platt Brett, B.E.F., France, December 6, 1916, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 313.

³² "Our Boys Unequaled," in *The Canadian Daily Record*, London, October 9, 1918, The Canadian War Records Office Collection, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON.

the wild, through which there blows both the warm wind of Romance and the cold breath of reality... the imagination which can convey to the future the agonies and heroisms of the past, and the chiselled style shaping the rough outlines of the records into a clean cut and enduring narrative.³³

The romantic style of Charles G.D. Roberts was needed to create the right feeling for the story of the battle of the Somme. Beaverbrook was at odds with some of the other leaders of the Canadian Expeditionary force, especially its leader General Arthur Currie, on exactly how the actions of the Canadian forces should be portrayed. In a letter to Harold Daly, just after the release of volume 3, Currie claimed that the depiction of battle in the *Canada in Flanders* series resembled the truth about as much as mutton stew resembled a sheep.³⁴ Currie believed that the Canadian War Records Office's use of fiction writers was creating an idealized view of the war. While certainly not as colourful as Roberts's fictional works, the account of the battle of the Somme dwells more on the very heroic actions of the Canadian Army, and less on the losses of ground and the daily grind that were the realities of the fighting. However, Currie's main objections were of a political nature.

Currie wrote a letter to Roberts outlining his objections to the series and on July 11, 1918, Roberts sent a reply in order to explain the supposed deficiencies. Currie claimed that Roberts had not attempted to contact him during the writer's stay in France and had not consulted the General while he was in London. Roberts explained to the General that he had called on the General several times during the writing of the manuscript, but to no avail.³⁵ Another charge levelled at Roberts by the leader of the Canadian forces was that the volume ignored the efforts of the first division during this period. In reply, Roberts asked that the General read page 30 and

³³ Lord Beaverbrook, "Introduction," in *Canada in Flanders* vol. 3, x-xi.

³⁴ Arthur Currie to Harold Daly, First Army Headquarters, October 26, 1918, in *The Selected Papers of Sir Arthur Currie: Letters, Diaries, and Report to the Ministry, 1917-33*, ed. Mark Osbourne (Waterloo: LCMSDS Press of Wilfrid Laurier University, 2008), 129.

³⁵ Charles G.D. Roberts to Arthur Currie, B.E.F. France, July 11, 1918, in *The Collected letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 314.

31; as well, Roberts pointed out that the book focused on the creation of the other divisions, much as the first volume of the series had focused on the establishment of the First division.³⁶ Roberts believed that if Currie had only “done me the honour to read the book as a whole... I am confident you would have acquitted me...”³⁷ Roberts’s writing was not at fault; the *Canada in Flanders Series* was a victim of the political intrigue that had infected the Canadian army.

The dispute that ended the *Canada in Flanders Series* was a longstanding political battle between Sir Arthur Currie and Lord Beaverbrook. The major source of Beaverbrook’s power was that no one in England wanted to deal directly with Sir Samuel Hughes. Beaverbrook and Hughes set out to control the appointment of high ranking positions in the Canadian Corps. When the position of head of the Canadian Corps needed to be filled, after the removal of Sir Julian Byng, Beaverbrook was shocked when Currie was chosen over his man, Sir Richard Turner. According to Tim Cook, the climate of entitlement amongst Canada’s political elite was so thick that, “If Turner would not command the Corps, Aitken and others thought they should receive some concessions in exchange.”³⁸ Currie was well aware that he had not been the faction’s choice and blamed Beaverbrook for starting multiple rumours that plagued the General during his command. The rumours included stories about going on vacation during battles, returning to London because of a bad case of venereal disease, and that he would soon be removed from command.³⁹ This group, led by Hughes and Beaverbrook, continued to be a thorn in Currie’s side throughout the war.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 314.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 314.

³⁸ Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher*, 191.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 235.

The *Canada in Flanders Series* was written from the war diaries of the units involved, and according to Lord Beaverbrook, always tried to portray the battles accurately.⁴⁰ Another history released around the same time, Rudyard Kipling's *The Irish Guards in the Great War*, takes the same approach to covering the history of the war. Kipling claimed in his introduction that he has going, "...to limit himself to matters which directly touched the men's lives and fortunes."⁴¹ Kipling's history was not an official history and was released after the end of the war. However, comparing the two books one can see that Roberts's style was not nearly as romantic as it would have been had Roberts been writing for a popular audience. Instead, *Canada in Flanders* is a "very-by-the-book" account of the war with flourishes of excitement thrown in to keep people awake. Some paragraphs are entirely devoted to describing the chain of command in a particular unit and how it changed as men died or were promoted. Other paragraphs focused on pinpointing the exact locations of the Canadian movements in a given month. In fact it could be argued that the dryness of the other information, and not Roberts's desire to focus on it, makes the individual actions seem to take over the narrative. More than anything else, the trench raids and individual acts of valour gave the talented pen of Roberts cause to dance upon the page more than the lists of commanders and positions would otherwise permit.

The Somme, like most of the battles of the Great War, was a back and forth engagement, where each inch of ground gained cost hundreds of men. Roberts's representation, while sticking to the facts gleaned from the war diaries of the units who fought the battle, focuses on the positive actions and brief periods of excitement. All of the chapters explain the movements and losses of ground, but the reader's eye is drawn to the incidents of hand to hand combat, and

⁴⁰ Lord Beaverbrook, "Introduction," v.

⁴¹ Rudyard Kipling, *The Irish Guards in the Great War* (London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1923), vi.

the most romantic, in the literary sense of the term, of all the Great War battle tactics, the trench raid. When describing the successful storming of Courcellette, Roberts claimed, "...the story of it does not afford that intense dramatic interest, those soul-racking fluctuations, those moments of terrible suspense, those snatchings of victory out of defeat, which may be found in the accounts of many lesser engagements."⁴² The chapter focuses most of its attention on describing the skirmishes after the battle as battalions moved through the newly conquered territory to remove the last pockets of resistance, a process the men referred to as "mopping up."⁴³ These were the jobs that allowed for the most personal glory, as a handful of men attacked a specific target--as opposed to a battle, where most of the action involved a large group of men firing in the direction of the enemy.

In his dry official history, the originator of the backwoodsman stories still found time to focus on the manly men doing manly deeds. Though most of the book is a simple relaying of positions and changes in command, you can almost feel the energy in the descriptions of events when his pen is unchained and allowed to tell a story. This is especially true when he recounts the story of a battalion from New Brunswick. Describing the securing of a small piece of German territory, he writes: "All this business of "mopping up" gave opportunity for individual prowess, and the woodsmen and river-men, small farmers and independent townsmen of the sturdy loyalist province threw themselves into it with particular zeal."⁴⁴ The focus on the men of New Brunswick could also be seen as an attempt to curry the favour of fellow New Brunswicker Beaverbrook and thus taking sides in the feud between Beaverbrook and Currie. The other

⁴² Charles G.D. Roberts, *Canada in Flanders* vol. III (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), 52.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

provinces did not get the same build-up to their efforts in the battle, but Roberts was always ready to write of the daring deeds of individual Canadians.

The fourth instalment of *Canada in Flanders* was to be the last instalment in the series, yet the official account of Canada's victory at Vimy Ridge was never released. The battle between Currie and Beaverbrook ended the *Canada in Flanders* program and Roberts finished out the war writing little pieces for the War Records Office. While Currie's main problem was a belief that Beaverbrook was bad mouthing him in powerful circles, the skirmish played out in a fight between romanticism and realism. Currie asserted that the idealized version of the war being printed by the Canadian War Records Office was not a fair assessment of the situation.⁴⁵ Still, that version had been based on the records provided by the units who fought the war. Aside from adding a little flare to the accounts, the goal of the series had always been to maintain an accurate account of the battles. Beaverbrook's introduction to volume three of the series, before gushing over the new author, corrects mistakes and slipups made in the previous volume.⁴⁶ Roberts wrote to Macmillan editor George Platt Brett that he believed the books were accurate.⁴⁷ Roberts approached this work with a very serious conviction to tell the history of the Canadian war effort.

Roberts was demobilized almost a full year after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. The War Records Office had designed an exhibition of Canadian war photographs and Major Charles G.D. Roberts, the celebrated writer, was called upon to deliver the opening addresses when the display opened in a new centre. This relatively relaxed assignment allowed him to

⁴⁵ Arthur Currie to Harold Daly, First Army Headquarters, October 26, 1918, in *The Selected Papers of Sir Arthur Currie: Letters, Diaries, and Report to the Ministry, 1917-33*, ed. Mark Osbourne (Waterloo: LCMSDS Press of Wilfrid Laurier University, 2008), 129.

⁴⁶ Lord Beaverbrook, "Introduction," v.

⁴⁷ Roberts to George Platt Brett, B.E.F., France, December 6, 1916, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 313.

focus attention on his writing. During this period Roberts released *In the Morning of Time*, and *New Poems*. Some scholars see *In the Morning of Time*, as Roberts's best novel. The literary scholar John Moss saw the prehistoric novel as awash with "anthropocentric abandon," one in which the setting allowed Roberts the freedom to unleash his creative energy.⁴⁸ Many fans demanded that Roberts write a sequel to this work. Dr. Ernest Fewster, a close friend of Bliss Carman's, drew a map of the land based on the book hoping to inspire Roberts to create another work. In a letter sent on, Fewster reminded Roberts that the mammoth had only broken Grom's ribs and he could still live and have more adventures.⁴⁹ Roberts devoted most of his post-war creative energy to poetry.

The soldier's poetry that came out of this period reflects his experiences at the front. The poems contained a sorrow over the losses, but also a fierce pride in the accomplishments of the English race; that is, the people of the Empire. In the opening poem, "To Shakespeare in 1916," Roberts asks the first among England's bards about the accomplishments of the British in this their latest test. The poem "Cambrai and Marne," reveals the deep attachment Roberts felt to the fighting he had witnessed,

A handful to their storming hordes
We scourged them with the scourge of swords,
And still, the more we slew, the more
Came up for every slain a score.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ John Moss, "Writing to the Reader: The Novels of Charles G.D. Roberts," in *Proceedings of the Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Symposium*, ed. Carrie Macmillan (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 1984), 88.

⁴⁹ Ernest Fewster to Charles G.D. Roberts, Vancouver, April 4, 1933, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

⁵⁰ Charles G.D. Roberts, *New Poems* (London: Chiswick Press, 1919).

The poem deals with one of the biggest issues of the Great War, the back and forth, gaining and losing ground in the drudgery of trench warfare. The imagery that Roberts created in this collection was too upbeat for the jaded crowds of the immediate post-war Empire.

The two latest volumes from Roberts were doing well, but the moods and temperaments of the reading public were shifting away from the genre that had been Roberts's claim to fame, the animal story. At a Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Symposium, at Mount Allison University, in 1982, Joseph Gold delivered a paper entitled "The Ambivalent Beast," which dealt with the appeal of the animal story. Gold suggested that "The stories allowed the stuffy Victorians to indulge and sublimate their desires."⁵¹ The animal story put the shocking realities of nature on display. Gold explained the decline in popularity that followed the Great War as an awakening to the fact that "The savage is nearer to us than we had thought and repression and sublimation have come to seem irrelevant and inappropriate."⁵² The people had experienced savagery first-hand and in a very different way. The animals of Roberts's tales never killed each other over petty disagreements. The animals must have seemed incredibly civilized to the people who had just witnessed so much inhumanity. The romantic attitudes that Roberts continued to hold after the war were completely out of step with the general population.

The war record of Charles G.D. Roberts tells us a lot more about the man than it might seem at first glance. All accounts of the 54-year-old Roberts claim that he was in good shape, and this must have been so to do the work required of the troopers at Swaythingly. The author's own claims about his heartiness rang true, for he lived for months at a time in tents and under

⁵¹ Joseph Gold, "Ambivalent Beast," in *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Symposium*, ed. Carrie Macmillan, 78.

⁵² *Ibid*, 80.

terrible conditions while the undersupplied camp tried to cope with the foul-ups of the British Military supply. Such actions bring the praise Roberts received for his physical fitness and the belief of his claims to being an outdoorsman into perspective. He was clearly passionate about his Empire and his country's place in that Empire.

The description of the war we find in Roberts's reports, and his volume of the *Canada in Flanders* series, shows us the romantic lens that coloured his world. He saw the Great War as the continuation of a romantic and chivalric past. The battlefield was an avenue through which men could achieve bravery, and do their part for the empire. While Roberts had started off down this path, he decided by the end that his best service for the Empire would be performed with a pen. Roberts wrote to friends and colleagues about the dull nature of these writings since the structure was so heavily predetermined, but reading through these works one can feel an anxious pen waiting to glowingly relate any piece of interest. The drudgery of the official history was augmented in brief spurts by the acts of courage.

At the outset of the Second World War, an 80-year-old Roberts still felt duty bound to fight for King and Country. The pen remained his only weapon. In a letter to Lorne Pierce, editor of the Ryerson Press, Roberts writes: "Alas! But what would I not give to get up to our "Front" again and reel exultantly to the crashing of the big guns."⁵³ And while he claimed to be excited by the big guns, Roberts allows for a crack in his heroic facade, "But when the machine guns got chattering, my tail went between my legs..."⁵⁴ By then, the aged poet knew of the realities of war and wanted to support the next generation of soldiers in any way he could. Roberts suggested to Pierce that the profits from *Canada Speaks of Britain*, a collection of poems

⁵³ Charles G.D. Roberts to Lorne Pierce, Toronto, October 19, 1940, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 578.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 578.

Roberts wrote about the war, should go to the war effort. The proceeds were sent to the Canadian War Services Library Council.⁵⁵ In these poems Roberts was driven by passion and not as controlled by form or style.

Even before the official declarations of war in 1939, Roberts began to write poems in support of the Allied forces. In a letter to Watson Kirkconnell, the poet worries that his words are not enough and he claims that the poem “In Time of Earth’s Distress” (eventually released as “In Time of Earth’s Misuse”) only “Feebly expresses my sentiments.”⁵⁶ The poetry that came to Roberts during this period was a departure from his older works. Form and style took a back seat to passion. Unsure of this new style, Roberts worried that the poems were too topical or, as he describes them, “Not poetry, but ‘polemics.’”⁵⁷ W.A. Deacon tried to assuage these fears by saying that these poems were, “...a very fine piece of journalism.”⁵⁸ Deacon believed that not writing about the war during this period of total war would be a waste, “We are in the greatest historic period and I demand writing worth my time shall speak of our present problems.”⁵⁹ Roberts was writing poems that resonated, he hoped, with the tone of the era. He knew that he was not making as great a contribution to this war effort, as he had the last, but he was consumed by his sense of duty to the Empire. No longer a soldier, Roberts was still doing his part for the nation.

⁵⁵ Charles G.D. Roberts to Lorne Pierce, Toronto, October 1, 1940, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 598.

⁵⁶ Charles G.D. Roberts to Watson Kirkconnell, Toronto, February 12, 1940, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 585.

⁵⁷ Charles G.D. Roberts to Lorne Pierce, Toronto, June 3, 1940, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 593.

⁵⁸ W.A. Deacon to Charles G.D. Roberts, Toronto, April 15, 1942, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter 5

Presiding Over Canadian Literature

The drive to create uniquely Canadian cultural products led some members of the Canadian cultural elite to the conclusion that Canada needed to protect her artists from the mass media centres of the English-speaking world. Canada did possess a group of cultural elites that held influence over the populace and men such as Roberts, Lorne Pierce, Pelham Edgar, Ralph Connor, and W.A. Deacon controlled the national dialogue. Ryan Edwardson, in his book, *Canadian Content: Culture and the quest for Nationhood*, describes people like those mentioned above as “masseyites,” those cultural producers who believed that Canadian cultural products were getting lost in the frenzied mass media that was filtering into the country from Britain and the United States.¹ While most of the men described in this chapter died before the Massey Commission appeared in 1951, their drive to protect native Canadian cultural products from American interference makes them members of this group.

In 1925 Charles G.D. Roberts returned to Canada for the first time in over 18 years. Returning at the age of 65, Roberts had had a long and successful career. As a young man Roberts knew that he wanted to play a leading role in developing the new dominion. Canada was only 15 years-old when Roberts wrote to his cousin Bliss Carman, “I feel it in [my] bones, or in the air... that within a very few years there is going to [be] lots for us to do in Canada.”² Roberts could sense “an awakening of Canada, in politics, art, song, intellectual effort

¹ Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 29.

² Charles G.D. Roberts to Bliss Carman, Fredericton, December 12, 1882, in *The Collected Letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 16

generally.”³ When he wrote this letter to Carman at the age of 22, already having one book, *Orion and other Poems*, under his belt, the young poet was already inspiring others who had not previously believed Canadians were capable of engaging in intellectual pursuits. Forty-three years later, the man hailed as the “father of Canadian Literature” came home to start his Canadian lecture tour at Jarvis Collegiate in Toronto. This first tour was the beginning of a new phase in Roberts’s life; the aging author could no longer support himself by his pen alone and he began to live off of his reputation. This is not to say that the artist no longer created; many critics consider his poetry about the Second World War to be among his finest works. However, he began to focus on developing new Canadian talent through his involvement in the Canadian Authors Association (CAA).

Canadian cultural elites always had to deal with the fact that they could not compete with their American and British counterparts. In his seminal work on the topic of antimodernism, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of the American Culture, 1880-1920*, T. J. Jackson Lears’s conception of the power of cultural elites came from Gramsci’s notion of “cultural hegemony”- combined with Freud’s ideas of the sub-conscious. Lears asserts that the changes in culture are not driven by capitalist desires but by the sub-conscious.⁴ While he was describing the American literati’s fears of effeminacy, this framework can be applied to the Canadian literati’s fears of American domination. Americanization has always been a threat to the Canadian nation. This fear concerning the inadequacy of our national culture has been a major theme of the cultural products from this country. In Margaret Atwood’s assessment of the Animal stories written by Roberts and Seton, the prey represents the Canadian and the predator is

³ *Ibid*, 16.

⁴ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xv.

the American.⁵ As I have already stated, I disagree with Atwood's assessment of the animal story; however, it is interesting that other Canadian critics have made this connection as well. Atwood, James Polk, and Northrop Frye all see these acts of victimization that appear in Canadian literature as representations of the relationship between Canada and the United States. These subconscious fears have caused Canadian cultural elites to develop new strategies and seek protection from the federal government.

The Canadian intelligentsia could not compete against its American counterparts and existed as a subculture in its own country. According to Edwardson, Canadian society was caught up in the American mass media machine, "Too much of Canadian society seemed under the influence of American pulp periodicals ... radio programs of inferior quality, and escapist Hollywood feature films promoting American lifestyles."⁶ All of these forums were focused on reaching a popular audience and laced with commercials for American products. Canadian publishers realized that they needed help in this struggle and they focused on gaining government protection and support in order to build their market. The main arguments involved the low cultural value of the imported cultural items and that these mediums promoted American products and not Canadian wares. Returning to Edwardson, the masseyites believed that "The realities of nation-building in a mass media society required implementing limitations to the founts of commercial debauchery where possible and, conversely, establishing public institutions capable of offering the masses a cultural alternative to mass content."⁷ Unfortunately for the masseyites, even after the advent of public broadcasting in Canada, they could only offer a high brow alternative to American media; they could not force Canadians to accept it.

⁵ Margaret Atwood, *Survival* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), 75.

⁶ Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 10.

⁷ Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content*, 28.

The CAA started as a part of this drive to develop Canadian culture: a safety in numbers strategy to maintain the predator versus prey analogy. The association provided a medium through which young authors could interact with men like Roberts, Ralph Connor, and Bliss Carman, men who had, so to speak, been “in the trenches” fighting to make a place for Canadians, although more specifically themselves, in the bigger markets. The CAA was started by the editorial committee of the *Canadian Bookman* and held its first meeting on March 12, 1921.⁸ The job fell to the poet W.D. Lighthall to invite people who best represented Canadian literature to join the association. The more prominent names included Roberts, his brother Thede, Bliss Carman, Arthur Stringer, Ernest Thompson Seton, and Robert Service, none of whom lived in Canada at the time.⁹ The need to support Canadian literature was especially acute since so many Canadian professional writers had left the country. From Lighthall’s original list, over 300 rejection letters were returned.¹⁰ The authors would not return to Canada. Of the men listed above, only Roberts and his brother returned to live in Canada full time. Stringer and Carman visited Canada and spoke at CAA conventions but they lived in America. Although the CAA started without him, when Roberts returned to Canada he embraced the movement wholeheartedly.

The Canadians who went abroad to blaze the trail had been hailed as heroes. Canadians followed their careers even during the last quarter of the nineteenth century when Roberts and others were still struggling to build their audience. One of the biggest problems with the reverence Canadian critics had for these men was that it stifled true criticism of their work. In an attempt to establish a comprehensive theory regarding the character of Canadian literature,

⁸ Lyn Harrington, *Syllables of Recorded Time: The Story of The Canadian Author's Association, 1921- 1981* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1981), 15.

⁹ *Ibid*, 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 21.

Northrop Frye later turned to the image of a fort on the open plains. The garrison theory described the Canadian literary imagination as focused on surviving against foreign cultural forces, “A garrison is a closely knit and beleaguered society, and its moral and social values are unquestionable,” Frye wrote.¹¹ This mentality had infected not only the writers, but the critics of Canada. W.J. Keith believed that Roberts’s poetry could not evolve beyond the sophomoric phase because of this treatment from Canadian critics.¹² This view had been put forward by a Canadian critic named Gordon Waldron as early as 1897. In an article in the December issue of *The Canadian Magazine*, Waldron claimed that Canadians were far too kind to Roberts, Carman, and Lampman, and that this was allowing these men to continue creating drivel.¹³ Men, such as Prof. A.B. De Mille of King’s College, responded by pointing to the international success that these men had achieved: “...the men who are thus dealt with have won fame in a wider than Canadian field and deserve juster treatment.”¹⁴ De Mille’s assertion was that all three poets had received critical acclaim and it was not just a case of Canadian critics putting their kid gloves on. At the same time the argument can be seen as calling Canadian critics unworthy of criticising those who had won fame abroad.

The idea of a “garrison mentality” was more than just a literary theme: it became a large part of our national consciousness. It was not just paranoia, for American and British culture dominated Canadian bookshelves and newsstands. The fear of being conquered culturally forced writers to band together. Unfortunately, the polarizing rhetoric produced by the garrison mentality does not combine all the elements of a society as heterogeneous as Canada. The

¹ Northrop Frye, <http://northropfrye-thebushgarden.blogspot.com/2009/02/conclusion-to-literary-history-of.html> (accessed March 27, 2011).

¹² W.J. Keith, *Charles G.D. Roberts*, 35.

¹³ Gordon Waldron, “Canadian poetry, a Criticism,” in *The Canadian Magazine* vol. 8, no. 1 (1896): 102.

¹⁴ A.B. De Mille, “Canadian Poetry – A Word in Vindication,” in *The Canadian Magazine* vol. 8, no. 5 (1897): 433.

garrison demands a uniformity that the society cannot provide. During its lifetime the CAA connected Canada's writers as a community of authors from sea to sea. The garrison focused the writer on his enemies. As Frye noted, "These attitudes help to unify the mind of the writer by externalizing his enemy, the enemy being the anti-creative elements in life as he sees life."¹⁵ The enemy of the CAA, to keep with the military analogy, was the mass media outlets of the United States. These outlets made it nearly impossible to make a living as a writer in Canada and the soldiers of the garrison set out to fight for the life of the mind in Canada.

Who better to lead the garrison but the soldier of letters, Major Charles G.D. Roberts? Roberts worked hard in his post as National President to build the membership and promote Canadian literature. Lyn Harrington's history of the CAA credits Roberts with a revival of the association that had already started to fall apart in its first five years. "In his year of office, the sixty-seven-year-old president had visited all the branches from Ontario to Victoria."¹⁶ The branches in the Maritimes provinces had crumbled in the CAA's opening years. Roberts, a proud New Brunswicker, knew of the important contributions these small provinces had made to the country's culture. Thomas Chandler Haliburton, Lucy Maud Montgomery, Bliss Carman, and the Roberts family had all come from these provinces and that was why Roberts knew they deserved their own branches. Already President of the Toronto branch, and the National association, Roberts set out to restart these failed branches.¹⁷ His energy and youthful enthusiasm inspired potential writers to join. Enrolment was high during Roberts's time as president.

¹⁵ Northrop Frye, <http://northropfrye-thebushgarden.blogspot.com/2009/02/conclusion-to-literary-history-of.html> (accessed March 27, 2011).

¹⁶ Lyn Harrington, *Syllables of Recorded Time*, 102.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

In his biography of Roberts, John Coldwell Adams describes this period of the poet's life in a chapter called "Honour without Profit."¹⁸ This aptly titled chapter covers a period of worldwide economic depression; however, Roberts's sales and popularity dwindled. His style of writing was no longer in line with the current trends. Poetry was moving into a new phase under the influence of literary "modernism," which rejected the flowery romantic verse that characterized the poems of the Confederation group. Animal stories no longer shocked audiences who had just been through a war that produced more savagery than any bestial tale. This was the role Roberts played as the leader of Canadian literature, one that enabled him to survive through these tough economic times.

The first tours were very lucrative as the Canadian people turned out in droves to see this icon of Canadian letters. During his first years back in Canada, Roberts was booked for conferences in the main cities from coast to coast. His daughter-in-law co-ordinated the Eastern tour and Lorne Pierce organized Roberts's western dates. Hugh Eayrs, the editor of Macmillan of Canada, co-ordinated with all the bookstores along Roberts's tour to make sure that Roberts titles were out front when the Old Man was in town. In a letter to Roberts, Eayrs claimed that he did this for "the glory of God and the benefit pocketly of Roberts and Eayrs."¹⁹ The Old Man was still in high demand in his homeland and the sales increased when Roberts came to deliver a lecture. This was why Pierce and Eayrs helped Roberts organize his tours throughout the 1920s. Roberts's western tour in the second half of 1925 was his first time being west of Windsor, Ontario. The West loved this man whose spirit, and energy matched their own.

¹⁸ John Coldwell Adams, *Sir Charles God Damn: The Life of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 160.

¹⁹ Hugh Eayrs to Charles G.D. Roberts, Toronto, Oct. 4, 1926, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

Vancouver, in particular, was a welcoming stop on the national tour. The University of British Columbia secured Roberts to teach a course in the winter semester of 1926. The position of instructor paid a stipend of \$500 per course, but Roberts was also enjoying his time in this flourishing arts scene. The League of Western Writers, a fledgling organization at this time, tried to emulate the CAA, so much so that during Roberts's tenure at the University of British Columbia it welcomed Roberts as a mentor.²⁰ The artistic community Roberts found on the west coast was said to hold a special place in his heart. He attended several League functions, but lamented that its energy far exceeded its planning. In Portland, Oregon, he lectured League members on the value of organization, but to no avail.²¹ The League would fold in 1935, long after Roberts had left the organization to its own fate. Wherever Roberts went he was lecturing and inspiring young writers.

In July of 1926, Dr. Aletta E. Marty's Summer School of Canadian Literature booked Roberts for four lectures at the Epworth Inn in Muskoka. This was where Roberts would meet his future biographer, Elsie Pomeroy, for the first time.²² The lectures were a resounding success and Roberts earned the respect of his colleagues and students. It was his extracurricular activities that earned Roberts some notoriety; as Wilson Macdonald claimed, "He lives in a state of sexual excess."²³ This was in response to Roberts's behaviour towards two young ladies that the latter had introduced to the "Father of Canadian Literature." Roberts had been frequently tied to many ladies as he travelled across the nation during his presidency. The 66 year old poet had not lost his touch. What is known of the extent of these relationships remains hearsay, but the old man did sustain his reputation for youthful vigour.

²⁰ Elsie Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts: A Biography* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943), 295.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 298.

²² John Coldwell Adams, *Sir Charles God Damn*, 139.

²³ *Ibid.*, 139.

As the recital tours began to dry up, Charles found himself searching for new areas with which to share his gift. In 1929 he wrote to his friend, "I feel that I have done enough talking in Toronto for a while; I am tired & stale."²⁴ The dwindling crowds and the malaise of familiar faces had become wearing. The author began to look to the smaller centres of southern Ontario: Windsor, Hamilton, Niagara Falls.²⁵ In later years he would move north. The northern Ontario library tour of the 1930s was not a financial success for Roberts, but he did enjoy the chance to engage with the smaller, less pretentious crowds of towns like Haileybury, Ontario. The Library Society of Haileybury was thrilled to hear that its members would have the opportunity to hear the works of Charles G.D. Roberts, read by the author himself. Libraries and book fairs became the main venues for his performances. He claimed to like the intimacy provided by the smaller venues, but his ability to draw a crowd had diminished. It was quite a step down from the reception he received upon his return home from Europe.

In the 1930s the publishing industry was suffering under the same problems as the rest of the market, and men who were trying to make a living with their pens found themselves facing new obstacles. Roberts was not alone in his financial troubles. Publishing companies were slashing prices across the board and trying to make books affordable for a world fallen on hard times. *Eyes in the Wilderness*, Roberts's last collection of animal stories, was released into this new climate in 1933. The new royalty arrangements allowed the publishing companies to pay Roberts based on the price received without any minimum payments, and as the economic depression continued his publishers reorganized all of their royalty arrangements along these lines. H.S. Latham, Vice-President of the Macmillan Company of New York, wrote to Roberts

²⁴ Charles G.D. Roberts to Edwin Austin Hardy, Toronto, October 18, 1929, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 388.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 388.

in 1934 asking the father of Canadian literature to reduce his royalties on all of his titles with their house to, “10% of the price received.”²⁶ This agreement allowed Macmillan to keep the book priced at \$1.50. As Latham stated in a letter, it was the only way to keep older titles like *The Kings in Exile* in print. Latham apologized to Roberts for the new arrangement and added, “We have to resort to all sorts of emergency measures in unusual times like the present.”²⁷ The Great Depression was changing the way everyone did business.

Roberts was forced to make similar arrangements with his other publishers. J.M. Dent & Sons adjusted its contracts with Roberts in May, of 1937. The letter begins, “I have been looking into the sales of your books... and I feel as disappointed as you must by their smallness.”²⁸ The company asked for the same arrangement as the Macmillan Company on all eight Roberts titles in its catalogue. New book or old, sales were slow. *Eyes in the Wilderness* was a Dent-published title and had never sold as well as Roberts’s earlier work. Dent’s plan was to offer library suppliers and exporting booksellers reduced rates, “In view of the coolness of the public towards the books during the last year or two our sales department doesn’t feel over confident about selling the books...”²⁹ The animal story did not have the same market share it had during the first decades of the twentieth century. At the time Roberts received this letter he was 77 years old. The septuagenarian writer was unable to produce new work at the rate he had when he was in his prime.

Even with the drastic measures in place, sales continued to drop as the world remained in the depths of the Great Depression. Looking at two of Roberts’s royalty statements from J.M.

²⁶ H.S. Latham to Charles G.D. Roberts, New York, January 15, 1934, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ J.M. Dent & Sons to Charles G.D. Roberts, London, May 27, 1937, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

²⁹ Ibid.

Dent & Sons, each covering a six month period, we can see part of the dramatic drop in sales that prompted its letter of May 27, 1937. Between January 1st and June 30th of 1933, Roberts sold 7883 books from his numerous titles in the Dent catalogue.³⁰ Seven years later the same publishing company sold only 134 of Roberts's books in a six month period.³¹ These disappointing figures came after the letter to Roberts in May of 1937 and the implementation of the Dent Sales Department's plan to improve sales. Sales had declined rapidly. The first royalty period in 1933 had not been a fair assessment of the situation, for the top sellers on that list were *Some Animal Stories* and *More Animal Stories*, reprints of stories from other collections. These books were part of the King's Treasury series, a line of cheaply-produced paperbacks targeted at a younger audience. Together these books accounted for over 7000 of the books on the earlier ledger.³² The hardcover edition of *In the Morning of Time* sold two copies.³³ The second ledger tells much the same story. We find *Further Animal Stories*, another of the King's Treasury series, selling the most copies and the full-priced books selling less than 15 copies per title.³⁴ One difference between the two ledgers was that in 1940 book sales were no longer covering the cost of production and Roberts account was left owing from each title.³⁵ The reasons for the renegotiating the royalty contracts were clear.

The market in Canada was little different from its counterparts in Britain and the United States. While publishers had to deal with more government regulation than in other markets, the

³⁰ J.M. Dent & Sons LTD to Charles G.D. Roberts, London, June 30, 1933, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

³¹ J.M. Dent & Sons LTD to Charles G.D. Roberts, London, December 31, 1940, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

³² J.M. Dent & Sons LTD to Charles G.D. Roberts, London, June 30, 1933, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ J.M. Dent & Sons LTD to Charles G.D. Roberts, London, December 31, 1940, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

result was the same. In 1940, Roberts asked Lorne Pierce if Ryerson Press would buy the Canadian rights for a few of his animal story collections. In March of 1940 Pierce sent a letter to Roberts trying to explain the difficult situation: "...the governments of the provinces have now taken over practically the whole recommended book market."³⁶ This made the promotion of new titles very expensive and Pierce lamented to Roberts that "I am not sure you stand to gain anything from the Canadian sales."³⁷ This prognosis must have been very difficult for the dean of Canadian letters to hear. Canada was the place where Roberts was most popular; yet even in his homeland he could not turn a profit. He continued to receive honours and praise for his achievements, but this must have felt hollow in view of his inability to sell his work.

It is difficult for modern writers to understand how Roberts would have interpreted his success in this period for he possessed a different idea of what it meant to be a successful writer. Roberts had a very elitist view of the masses. In a letter to a young female friend, Mary Vicary, in March of 1928, Roberts asked her why she would expect the masses "...to be anything but 'ordinary'? Any but 'sheep'?"³⁸ Paternalistic middle-class values pour out of Roberts as he continues: "Bless their dear souls, how inconvenient & even disastrous it would be if, without any of the necessary qualifications, they should try to think for themselves!"³⁹ The disconnect between Roberts and the vast majority of Canadians can be found in these passages. The success of the American popular culture can be found as well. The *masseyites* were fighting for a more traditional definition of the term "culture." They saw culture as high art, classical music, and belles lettres. "I feel very tender towards them," Roberts admits, "--& get much kindly amusement out of

³⁶ Lorne Pierce to Charles G.D. Roberts, Toronto, March 7, 1940, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Charles G.D. Roberts to Mary Vicary, Toronto, March 31, 1928, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

them.”⁴⁰ His elitist, paternalistic attitude prevented him from understanding the new trends in cultural production. Roberts had had commercial success in his career but gaining a popular audience was not his only goal.

The people most interested in Roberts’s work were now those compiling textbooks and anthologies. The relationship between Charles Roberts and the poet and educator, A.M. Stephen, began this way. On August 1, 1925, Stephen sent Roberts a letter about an anthology of Canadian literature Stephen was preparing for the British Columbia Department of Education. Stephen wanted the oft-quoted poem “Canada,” and some selections from *Earth’s Enigmas*. In addition, the letter flatteringly asked for any piece that Roberts felt belonged in such a collection. This last request may have been an attempt to gain Roberts’s favour and it must have worked since this letter began a correspondence that lasted until Stephen’s death in 1942, at the age of 60.⁴¹ The two men exchanged letters, poems, and congratulations as Roberts drifted into his twilight years. Stephen was a part of the flourishing Vancouver arts scene and had spent a great deal of time with Roberts when the poet lectured at the University of British Columbia.

The compilers continued to contact Roberts as they placed his work at the centre of the turn-of-the-century Canadian renaissance in poetry. Ralph Gustafson, while compiling an anthology of Canadian poems for Penguin Books, contacted Roberts in concerning the use of three poems that were controlled by L.C. Page & Co. of Boston. Gustafson’s book was to contain poems from Lloyd and Thede Roberts (as well as Bliss Carman and the rest of the Confederation poets) as a part of what Gustafson considered to be the older generation of Canadian poetry. The newer generation, represented by A.J.M. Smith, E.J. Pratt, and Irving

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴¹ Laurel Boone, *The Collected Letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 359.

Layton, believed they had made a break from the romantic notions of the Confederation group. These modernist poets attacked the Confederation poets in general, and Roberts, as the face of Canadian poetry, took the brunt of their criticism. While complimentary of Roberts's work, the compilers viewed his work as just another sign of outdated art and fading relevance.

Poetry was moving in new directions inspired by the works of Dylan Thomas and Ezra Pound, and always in opposition to the romantic sentiments of the Confederation Poets. Roberts was still writing the style of poetry that characterized his career. In a letter to Harriet Monroe, founder and editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, Roberts was flabbergasted by the editor's appraisal of his work. Monroe had sent Roberts's poems back to him marked simply "Retd. Ng [returned no good]- All about Pan."⁴² In a later letter Monroe informed Roberts that poems about Pan were quite out of fashion. Roberts and Monroe had both been born in 1860 and both had been involved in the literary world for most of their adult lives. However, as a critic Monroe was able to follow the trends and divorce herself from the emotional attachment to a particular genre. Roberts, in contrast, remained devoted to the classical imagery of Pan and the romantic sentiments evoked by this mythical figure. Roberts replied to Miss Monroe, "I am confident that you sent my verses back because as poetry they did not appeal to you,-- & not because you think "Great Pan is dead"!"⁴³ Roberts was not ready to move with the times and accept the modernist way of thinking.

Aware of the new trends in poetry, Roberts was simply unwilling to trade the grace of his romantic style for the jarring modernist poem. In a letter to Harrison Smith Morris, Treasurer of

⁴² Charles G.D. Roberts to Harriet Monroe, Toronto, November 15, 1928, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 378.

⁴³ Charles G.D. Roberts to Harriet Monroe, Toronto, September 23, 1929, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 387.

the National Institute of Arts and Letters from 1925 until 1936, Roberts laments, “New York editors have forgotten all about me. And strange new gods have arisen to rule American Poetry.”⁴⁴ Roberts asked Morris for his opinion of T.S. Eliot, E.E. Cummings and Wallace Stevens. The letter makes no attempt to malign the American poets, but Roberts remains convinced that he can still sell his poetry in England and Canada.⁴⁵ While this illustrates how Roberts was falling out of step with the literary world, in many ways due to his own stubbornness, another issue was that Roberts had lost another market for his writing. As he neared the end of his life Roberts’s audience was diminishing along with his bank account.

The mass media was partly to blame for the lack of interest in Roberts’s work.

According to Mary Vipond, in her book *Mass Media in Canada*, Canada was fully engrossed in the mass media by the end of the Great War. While Canada had always been inundated by the newspapers and magazines of the United States, by the 1920s Canadian newspapers and magazines had adopted a mass media format.⁴⁶ During his heyday, Roberts had benefitted from the whims of the fast-paced trends following mass media. In Nick Mount’s assessment, Roberts was the darling of the periodical press in the aftermath of the success of Seton’s *Wild Animals I have Known*.⁴⁷ The problem with trends is that they shift. Literary critic Joseph Gold claims that the shift occurred at the end of World War One, when people were tired of hearing about death. The animal story that had freed stuffy Victorians from their confining civility now seemed tame

⁴⁴ Charles G.D. Roberts to Harrison Smith Morris, Toronto, November 4, 1932, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 430.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 430.

⁴⁶ Mary Vipond, *The Mass Media in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company LTD, 2000), 25.

⁴⁷ Nick Mount, *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 99.

when compared to war.⁴⁸ A victim of the shifting trends, Roberts could not find a market for his writing.

As the setbacks piled up in the early 1930s, it was clear that Roberts could not sustain himself financially. In order to maintain his status as the “Father of Canadian Literature” something needed to be done. Lorne Pierce and Pelham Edgar used their influence in the CAA to pressure the Canadian government to provide financially for the nation’s most successful writer. On March 31, 1931 Roberts wrote to his son Lloyd, “...these committees of the ‘fund’ are getting to work, from ocean to ocean.”⁴⁹ Roberts hoped to be made a senator, a position to which he would have been well suited since his bachelor’s degree was in political economy. The poet lamented to his son that he would likely be thought of as a writer and his other contributions to Canadian life would be ignored.⁵⁰ As fitting as a senatorial appointment would have been, it would not have represented a commitment to Canadian literature. The pension secured by Pierce, Pelham Edgar, and the other members of the CAA was one of the first moves towards government sponsorship of Canadian culture.

This goal of government support was not all that unusual for Canadian industry. While the previous Liberal Government led by William Lyon Mackenzie King had been resistant to the idea of placing regulations on information and the arts (this was consistent with its belief in the principles of free trade), the Conservatives came to see the value of erecting trade barriers to protect the fledgling dominion from the encroachments of American enterprise. Magazine and book publishers did not receive protection and publisher’s organizations had been fruitlessly

⁴⁸ Joseph Gold, “Ambivalent Beast,” in *Proceedings of the Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Symposium*. ed. Carrie Macmillan (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 1984), 80.

⁴⁹ Charles G.D. Roberts to Lloyd Roberts, Toronto, March 9, 1931, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 400.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 400.

lobbying the government since the 1890s. American magazines like *Time*, *Life*, and *Harper's Monthly* dominated the Canadian newsstands. Canadian book publishers faced similar problems as they tried to compete against the American and British firms. The first government to listen to these requests was the Conservative government of Richard Bedford Bennett, which took office in 1930. The Conservatives quickly put a tariff barrier in place to protect Canadian magazines. Book publishers were yet to receive the assistance they were looking for, but Bennett was not about to leave his favourite poet out in the cold.

Bennett was one of Roberts's most notable fans. In a 1935 letter to the poet, he stated that "my earliest recollections of Canadian literature are intimately associated with your name."⁵¹ The Prime Minister, a fellow New Brunswicker, claimed in another letter to have turned to Roberts's poetry "when days are dark and the joy of reading brightens the monotony of life."⁵² Bennett wrote this in 1927, before he was elected Prime Minister; little did he know that days were going to need a lot more brightening in the coming years. Bennett's time as Prime Minister has been seen by many historians as a failure in terms of his inability to adjust to the new economic climate. His adherence to his red Tory ideology, and his faith in the ability of the market to recover, made many Canadians believe that he was not the man to lead Canada's economic recovery. The comfort that Bennett found in Roberts's poetry may explain why he approved a pension of \$2500 annually for Roberts from the National coffers during the depths of the depression.

⁵¹ R.B. Bennett to Charles G.D. Roberts, Ottawa, May 18, 1935, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

⁵² R.B. Bennett to Charles G.D. Roberts, Calgary, Nov. 8, 1927, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

The written word created a bond between the two men, and while Bennett refused to spend money on developing industry, or establishing a social safety net, he chose to spend money on his favourite poet. In his letters to Bennett, Roberts the life-long Tory lavished praise on the Conservative leader: “Ever since you became Prime Minister, you have steadily justified, --more than justified-- my utmost hopes and expectations.”⁵³ His fawning letters contained nothing but glowing praise for the Conservative Party leader. How could Bennett not help the man who said that “Only the great Sir John A. himself is your peer in Canadian Affairs”?⁵⁴ This was the highest praise Bennett could hope for, all the more special because it came from one of his favourite writers.

In October of 1931, Roberts became the first writer to receive the Authors’ Endowment Fund from the Canadian Authors’ Foundation. This organization was set up by educator and author, Dr. Pelham Edgar, to administer the fund and raise money for future recipients. The funding was provided by the federal government and the first cheque was issued in 1934.⁵⁵ Many financial burdens were lifted from Roberts’s back, and he claimed that *The Iceberg and Other Poems* could not have been written without that money.⁵⁶ In his thank you letter to the Prime Minister, Roberts says, “It has lifted a crushing burden off my old shoulders, and given me new life.”⁵⁷ Some of Roberts’s most productive years for poetry were still ahead of him because he now had the freedom to indulge in the sensual self-absorption in which poetry is created. The committees of the fund, as Roberts called the CAA branch members who had written letters and organized events in support of his bid for a pension, had won the battle to save him from debt.

⁵³ Charles G.D. Roberts to R.B. Bennett, Toronto, December 14, 1933, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 462.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 462.

⁵⁵ Laurel Boone, *The Collected Letters*, 322.

⁵⁶ Elsie Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, 312.

⁵⁷ Charles G.D. Roberts to R.B. Bennett, Toronto, November 6, 1934, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 478.

The most important accomplishment was the creation of a permanent fund to assist other Canadian authors. Edgar had been trying for some time to establish a Canadian writers fund to support those men who had dedicated their lives to literary pursuits.⁵⁸ Using the plight of Roberts, the CAA was able to show Canadians the difficulties they faced. After all, Roberts had done great service for the nation, he wrote one of the first histories of Canada, he wrote a volume of the official history of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and the vast majority of his writings were set in Canada. His situation was particularly damning of the cultural life of the country, because, if the father of Canadian literature could not make a living, how could any writer expect to thrive? Financial considerations had always made writing a precarious profession in Canada. Duncan Campbell Scott was a prime example of this problem, a terrific poet who made his living as a civil servant. Scott released several volumes of poetry and he was recognized for his talent throughout the Commonwealth. One is left to wonder how much more he might have done if he could have made a decent living as a writer.

After Roberts's death in 1943 the parliamentary grant that made the fund possible was revoked. The fund folded and the committees of the fund had to begin anew. Naysayers claimed that any worthy writer would be able to support himself.⁵⁹ Pelham Edgar, who had once again taken the lead, answered these critics:

Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, the first beneficiary, published more than sixty books that took Canada's name to many countries and furnished materials for our school readers at home. In his early and middle years of heavy production, he followed the usual custom of outright sales to his publishers...He simply could not live on what he could earn. Many felt the public disgrace of Canada's foremost man of letters being a pauper,⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Laurel Boone, *The Collected Letters*, 400.

⁵⁹ Lyn Harrington, *Syllables of Recorded Time*, 170.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.

Even after his death Roberts continued to aid in the fight for Canadian literature. Edgar was able to re-establish government funding for the organization now called the Canadian Writer's Foundation, which is still assisting Canadian writers today.⁶¹ Roberts's story illustrated the pitfalls of life as a Canadian writer. He had achieved success and he had done a lot for the nation, but he could not make a living. The pension he received was a validation of his life's work and a concrete statement about the value Canadians place on culture.

Before awarding the pension, Bennett had planned to award Roberts a title for his services to Canada. Roberts had won many awards and honours upon his return to Canada. In 1926, he had won the first ever Lorne Pierce Medal for his contributions to Canadian literature. He held many titles: professor, doctor, and Major, and his name was followed by Esq., LL.D., F.R.C.S.. On May 18, 1935 a letter marked "Personal and most confidential" was sent to Roberts from the Prime Minister's desk:

For over half a century you have made conspicuous contributions to the Literature of your country, both in prose and poetry. As a teacher, historian, poet and author you have won for yourself a commanding position in the world of Letters, which, in my opinion, merits recognition by the sovereign.⁶²

On June 3, 1935, the little boy from the Tantramar became Sir Charles George Douglas Roberts. According to Roberts this moment put "the crown on my life's work."⁶³ The leader of the garrison was not just a soldier: he was a knight.

In a speech delivered in 1940, the literary critic and publisher William Arthur Deacon recalled the nation's joy at the return in the 1920s of Canada's "Prodigal Grandfather."⁶⁴ Deacon

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁶² R.B. Bennett to Charles G.D. Roberts, Ottawa, May 18, 1935, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB.

⁶³ Charles G.D. Roberts to R.B. Bennett, Toronto, June 30, 1935, in *The Collected Letters*, ed. Laurel Boone, 494.

⁶⁴ W. A. Deacon, "Speech to Canadian Author's Association" (Address to the Canadian Author's Association January 12, 1940) Sir Charles G.D. Roberts Fonds, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, NB.

claimed that Roberts had been called back to Canada when “he learned that a new generation of writers in the homeland yearned for the prestige of his presence.”⁶⁵ Deacon’s speech contained very high praise for Roberts work, yet the orator kept returning to the fact that “He alone, of all our literary exiles, returned to lead the movement he had initiated.”⁶⁶ Deacon’s appraisal of Roberts’s career did not touch on any particular work or period; it would seem that Roberts’s claim to a leadership role in Canadian literature was his mere presence. This was not likely Deacon’s intention, but it was the net effect of his words. Carman had done lecture tours, and taught classes, but continued to live in the Catskills. Archibald Lampman had been a leading Canadian poet who died at a young age. Was Roberts the leader by default?

The “Prodigal Grandfather” had received many awards and honours upon his return. In addition to being the first recipient of the Lorne Pierce Medal for outstanding service to Canadian literature, he had been elected National President of the Canadian Authors Association (CAA) and the President of the Toronto branch. In later years, he would become the Honorary President of this organization, a title he held for the duration of his life.⁶⁷ In 1928, at the CAA’s national convention in Calgary, the Sarcee tribe bestowed the title of Chief Great Scribe on the aging writer. Honorary chiefdoms had already been given by the tribe to Edward VIII before his coronation, when he toured Canada as the Prince of Wales, along with British actor Sir John Martin-Harvey.⁶⁸ The most important title came in 1935 when Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, flouting the 1919 Nickle Resolution, allowed Canadians access to British titular awards. (The Nickle Resolution was a parliamentary resolution banning Canadians from accepting titular honours from foreign countries) The resolution did not receive assent as it was never read in the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Elsie Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, 292.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 297.

Senate. Bennett ignored the non-binding document, but it was reinstated when William Lyon Mackenzie King and the Liberal Party returned to power.⁶⁹ Sir Charles George Douglas Roberts was one of the few Canadians Bennett handpicked to receive this honour and he was the only person to receive a knighthood for his service to Canadian literature.

Clearly Roberts's contemporaries believed that his contribution to Canadian literature was significant. He had succeeded in international markets and had returned to led the way for young Canadians. He had made his mark during his own time, but unfortunately his work would not be regarded as timeless. His biggest success, the animal story, had been a fad. Romantic poetry remained out of fashion in the modernist era. Any assessment of Roberts must be tempered by the fact that he did not build a lasting legacy and came to be largely forgotten in his homeland. One legacy Roberts did leave for posterity was his vision of the Canadian man. The image that he created for himself, and its literary equivalent the backwoodsman, created a lasting conception of Canadian masculinity.

⁶⁹ Christopher McCreery, *The Order of Canada: Its Origins, History and Development* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 10.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

How should we assess the value of Sir Charles George Douglas Roberts in terms of Canadian arts and literature? He was among the first Canadians in the Post-Confederation era to achieve success in the American and British markets. He conveyed a strong image of Canadian manhood and he gave Canadians something to take pride in. As a Major in the Canadian army, the master of the nature story became a major voice of the Canadian war effort. Through tireless effort and countless cross country trips, Roberts inspired Canadians from coast to coast to pursue their dreams. Never a victim of the garrison mentality, Roberts was able to look past the disadvantages of Canadian life and to see a land full of opportunity. He had the confidence the Canadian intelligentsia needed as they tried to build a Canadian identity.

Roberts asked Lorne Pierce to publish a biography of the Dean of Canadian letters. Pierce had already been a member of the editorial committee that brought out James Cappon's book *Charles G.D. Roberts*, a small volume of literary criticism that included a short biographical sketch. Roberts gave the task of producing a full-scale biography to a very inexperienced writer, but devoted Roberts fan, Elsie Pomeroy. The glowing introduction Pierce wrote for the biography, published in 1943, shows the editor to be another devoted fan of the Dean:

Granted he had the way prepared for him...the fact remains that he stands head and shoulders above all others in that he was the first to make a definite, conscious, and sustained break with the past, as well as a conscious, deliberate and sustained dedication to the future of the country.¹

Pierce began his assessment of Roberts with a discussion of cultural nation building and the profound effect the knighted author had had on this process in Canada. Pierce cited many people

¹ Lorne Pierce, "Introduction," in *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts: A Biography* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943), xxi.

who believed, as he did, that Roberts had become part of the fabric of the nation's identity. The work of the poet and novelist could only be truly understood in the context of his native land.² Pierce, himself a champion of Canadian culture, saw the importance of Roberts's life and work in its contribution to the creation of a Canadian literary scene and consequently a Canadian identity.

Lorne Pierce was not looking for a tell-all biography to diminish his champion of Canadian literature. The editor already had an unpublished manuscript from Lloyd Roberts, the son of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, and refused to publish this work because it did not present an appropriate image of the poet's life. Lloyd Roberts had already sent ripples through the family with his 1923 book of recollections entitled *The House of Roberts*. The family became up in arms over his chapter "Linden Hall," which discussed the household of his maternal grandparents.³ The revelations of Lloyd Roberts's work would seem very tame to our current day society, for he simply reveals that his grandfather was very detached emotionally and that on occasion Charles Roberts borrowed money of his father-in-law.⁴ In a letter to his daughter Edith, Roberts expressed his dismay over his son's openness: "I was hurt by his 'Linden Hall' chapter even as you were, as I have always made plain to Lloyd."⁵ Roberts explains to her that he had always had the greatest respect for her grandfather and that she need not worry about his memory since Lloyd had promised to fix the chapter in a revised edition.⁶ This unfortunately, was never

² Ibid, xiii.

³ Lloyd Roberts, *The Book of Roberts: Comprising Certain small Incidents as Recalled by One of them and Here set Down for the First Time* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1923), 117.

⁴ Ibid, 123.

⁵ Charles G.D. Roberts to Edith Roberts, in *The Collected Letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), 482.

⁶ Ibid, 482.

released. The Ryerson Press never published any of Lloyd's further attempts to write about his family.

In the Queen's University Archives Lorne Pierce fonds there are a number of unpublished Canadian manuscripts. One of these is Lloyd Roberts's "Hell and High Heaven." The original title had been "Dark House," named after the cramped house in Fredericton where the family resided when Roberts left King's College. The house's poor conditions were thought to have claimed the life of Roberts's oldest son, Athelstan. When Pierce saw the manuscript he did not reject it outright; instead, he asked Lloyd to rewrite it, but as a novel. Lloyd followed these instructions but the novel was never released. We can only speculate as to the reasons for Pierce's rejection of the manuscript. The names of the family members were changed; yet anyone who was familiar with the Roberts family would have picked up on the similarities right away. Lloyd Roberts's eloquent, yet terribly self-indulgent, prose made for a rambling and hard-to-follow story. The Roberts family was a very traditional, middle-class family. They did not want people knowing their secrets, or indeed that they had secrets at all.

The Pomeroy biography, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts: A Biography*, had the opposite problem. The book oozed praise for the poet, and failed to provide a balanced appraisal of Roberts's life. From the very cracking of the cover the pretentiousness of the book begins to seep out as the reader looks over the long dedication:

To
THE ILLUSTRIOUS MEMORY OF
THE FATHERS OF CONFEDERATION
IS DEDICATED THIS LIFE OF
SIR CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS
IN WHOSE POETRY IS ENSHRINED
THEIR VISION OF A UNITED CANADA
*"Father of unity, make this people one!"*⁷

⁷ Elsie Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, Dedication page.

The intention behind this biography can easily be deduced from these opening lines and the many others of a similarly glowing nature that followed them. Now Roberts had always felt a deep connection with the Fathers of Confederation; he even once bit Sir Charles Tupper (the only physician Canadian Prime Minister) when he was trying to remove a loose tooth from the 7 year old future father of Canadian literature. However, the goal of this opening was to connect the work of the cultural nation builder to that of the political nation builders. While many people had previously made the connection--after all Roberts was a part of a group called the Confederation poets--this opening just serves to highlight the none too subtle approach taken by the biographer. Many books have a dedication page, and most people read over them without much thought. However this page sets the tone for the rest of the book.

The citation at the bottom of the dedication is the 9th line from Roberts's own poem "Collect For Dominion Day," released in his 1886 classic work *In Divers Tones*. The collection also includes the oft-quoted poem "Canada," with its opening line, "O child of Nations, giant limbed,"⁸ used by many scholars to illustrate the poet's dedication to the dream of national unity and his belief in the hidden potential of the young dominion. The choice probably surprised no one as most of the Canadian literary world knew of the relationship between Roberts and Pomeroy. The two had met when Roberts and his cousin Bliss Carman were delivering lectures to a group of English students at a weekend conference in Muskoka. The young student Pomeroy was a huge fan of the two poets and had made an impression on Roberts. Since the initial meeting the two had remained in close contact, and attended many Canadian Author's Association meetings and other cultural functions together, as friends.

One of the most common criticisms of Pomeroy's work was that she was too given to hero worship to provide a proper critique of the man whose career she had spent so many years

⁸ Charles G.D. Roberts, *In Divers Tones* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 2.

following. Her adoration for Roberts is evident on every page of the book and at times the description of a particular event becomes cloudy and confused beneath the weight of the compliments heaped upon the man:

When the poet appeared on the platform the majority of the people, particularly the young people who crowded the gallery, found it difficult to believe that the slight, young-looking man with iron-grey hair could be Charles G.D. Roberts whose name seemed to them almost legendary!⁹

The story being related is that of his first recital in the 1925 lecture tour. The sheer number of exclamation points used in the book belies the author's uncritical approach. Her inference regarding the feelings of the young people at this recital is hard to verify, factually speaking, and may be more telling of Pomeroy's feelings on her first encounter with the poet than of the feelings of those crowded into the Jarvis Collegiate auditorium.

The second major criticism of Pomeroy's work regards her sources. In her acknowledgements, she thanks "Sir Charles himself who supplied the greater part of the information."¹⁰ While it would not be considered unusually for a biographer to get as much information as possible from its human subject, the degree to which Roberts was involved in the book's creation seems substantial. In letters to Dr. Lorne Pierce and others connected with the biography's production, Roberts seems to be taking a leading role in the making of the book. Roberts claims in one exchange with Pierce that he had been working three nights a week with Pomeroy on the biography. For her part, Pomeroy appears to have believed that she needed to acquiesce to the demands of her elderly subject since the biography was to reflect his legacy.

Pomeroy and Pierce defended Roberts against all critics in this work, and made it a point to answer all charges levelled against it. His poems had been accused of lacking passion. His image as the Canadian poet laureate had come under attack as he had no great opus of poetry, or

⁹ Elsie Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, 273-4.

¹⁰ Elsie Pomeroy, *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts*, Copyright page.

masterpiece of prose that summed up the new Canadian philosophy. However, to these two Robertsites the great works were there and the passion for his home land rang out in his poetry. However, in holding Roberts as vastly superior to his competition, Pomeroy and Pierce conveniently ignored the many people who preferred the poetry of Carman and Lampman to that of Roberts. The biography also made it a point to mention that, while Seton's nature stories had outsold those written by Roberts, Seton freely admitted that he was the less gifted writer of the two masters of the animal story.

So what made his work so important to the building of the new nation? Was it just that he had been among the first Canadians to publish a substantial book that sold well internationally? Roberts not only started earlier, he also outlived Lampman and Carman. It could have simply been his longevity as a leading figure on the cultural scene that made him so important.

Canadians have always struggled with identity. They have tried to understand their unique union in terms of biculturalism, regionalism, and multiculturalism. Constantly at war with ourselves, Canadians have tried to bring order to the chaos that is Canadian nationalism. Benedict Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, claims that Christian European countries in the Dark Ages had the benefit of "unselfconscious coherence" to bind their nations together.¹¹ People belonged to a nation because God had made it so and they did not question it. As the western world became more secularized the older nations found their nationalism in their long history of existence.¹² Canada lacked the ancient lineage or the "unselfconscious coherence." As Canadians they have been

¹¹ Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 16.

¹² *Ibid.*, 10.

very aware of their recent appearance on the world stage. Far too often this has led to national self-doubt.

It has often been said that Canadians define themselves by what they are not, and this negative identity has often been targeted at their neighbours to the south. As much as we want to project this image of superiority over the United States, the negative identity philosophy has not created a positive self image. While many Canadians were mired in this mindset, Roberts maintained a positive outlook on Canada.

The creation of a national literature was seen by many Canadian intellectuals and cultural producers as an essential part of creating a national identity. For Lorne Pierce, “Any study of Sir Charles Roberts’ work must begin and end on this note.”¹³ It seems only fitting to end with a discussion of what the father of Canadian literature has meant to the nation. The citation from Pierce is preceded by the claim that Roberts’s achievements will be remembered with pride by Canadians for as long as there is a country called Canada. As Canada now approaches the 131st anniversary of the release of his first published book, *Orion and Other Poems*, it would be safe to say that Pierce’s statement has proved inaccurate. Canadians to this day have very little knowledge of their native literature. When the average Canadian thinks of great Canadian writers they are more likely to think of names like Atwood, Richler, and Mowat. While this may seem like a sad statement about the man who was considered to be the first among the Confederation Poets, it must be remembered that this was never his audience. The general public was not the target audience for any of the leading Canadian writers at this time. The middle-class intelligentsia was the main consumer of Canadian literature and of literature in general. So how do we assess Roberts’s contribution to our native literature and national consciousness?

¹³ Lorne Pierce, “Introduction,” xiv.

Roberts was among the first Canadians to live solely by his pen, and though he moved abroad he remained fiercely proud of his Canadian roots. Being Canadian was an important part of promoting himself as a nature writer. The markets he was after in the more developed places in the English-speaking world thought of Canada as a vast wilderness and its people as woodsmen. Roberts helped these stereotypes along by constantly engaging in outdoor activities and writing to his publishers about his adventures.

Roberts's appeal to aspiring Canadian writers was that he believed in himself and in his nation. The stories conveyed the strength of the Canadian backwoodsman. Inspiring characters like Dave Patton, Peter Noel, and even the Acadian Gaspar filled Canadian men with images of ruggedness, wit, and know-how. Different from the rule-breaking, wandering cowboy of American mythology, the backwoodsmen believed in the rule of law.

The fact remains that most Canadians do not know who Charles G.D. Roberts was and what he meant to early Canadian writers. Canadian cultural life has always been a subculture of its own society. Lamenting the state of current national identity, Ryan Edwardson states, "It is a testament to the lack of social cohesiveness that occurs when money-making becomes the foundation for cultural activity and domestic expression."¹⁴ Edwardson was referring to the fact that most Canadians received their conception of Canadian identity from Molson Canadian commercials and drinking Tim Horton's coffee. Seemingly hollow, these products represent activities that most Canadians enjoy. American identity is also tied up in targeted commercialism: Coca Cola, McDonald's, and Walmart all represent the American way of life to the citizens of that country.

¹⁴ Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 25.

These representatives of Canadian culture focus their advertising on the generally accepted elements of Canadian life: hockey, the great outdoors, and American misconceptions of Canada. The Molson commercial “The Rant” featured a man named Joe who listed many reasons why he was Canadian. This commercial touched off a massive debate in Canada over the state of our national identity in the late 1990s. Robert M. Seiler’s article, “Selling Patriotism / Selling Beer: The Case of the ‘I Am Canadian!’ Commercial,” explores the huge gains in the beer market made by Molson in the wake of this emotionally charged nationalistic marketing tool. The commercial was seen as a shift away from a traditionally reserved Canadian nationalism.¹⁵ Yet current Molson’s commercials continue to emphasize the Canadian wilderness and the idea that “We have the best backyard in the world.”¹⁶ The Canadian public responded enthusiastically to this ad and beer commercials have continued to focus on building nationalist sentiment to move their products. The Confederation Poets tried to build a national identity using literature; yet, their message ultimately was not as effective as the sales pitch of the now partly American-owned Molson’s Brewery.

¹⁵ Robert M. Seiler, “Selling Patriotism / Selling Beer: The Case of the “I Am Canadian!” Commercial,” in *American Review of Canadian Studies*, vol. 32 (2002): 40.

¹⁶ Molson Canadian Ad Campaign, <http://adtunes.com/forums/showthread.php?t=74751> (Accessed March 19, 2011).

Appendix A

Charles G.D. Roberts- Time Line

Jan. 10, 1860 – Born in Douglas New Brunswick to Rev. George G. and Emma Roberts.

Aug. 4, 1861 - The Roberts family moves to the Westcock Parsonage.

1864-1870 – Westmoreland County erupts with the Confederation debate.

Nov. 1873 – The Roberts family moves to Fredericton and Charles is enrolled in Collegiate school.

Sept. 1874 – George R. Parkin returns as headmaster of Fredericton Collegiate School.

1876 – Roberts enrolls in the University of New Brunswick.

June 1879 – Graduates with a Bachelors degree in Political Economy, and is already engaged to May Fenety.

Nov. 1879 – Accepts position of Principal at Chatham High and Grammar School.

1880 – *Orion and Other Poems* was published.

Dec. 29, 1880 – Marries May Fenety in Fredericton.

1881 – Graduates from UNB with his Masters of Arts.

Jan. 1882 – Accepts principalship of York Street School.

1883 – Leaves for Toronto to become Editor of *The Week*.

Sept. 1885 – Becomes Professor of English, Economics, and French at King's College in Windsor, Nova Scotia.

Feb. 4, 1892 – Goodridge Roberts the youngest of Roberts's siblings dies.

1895 – Leaves position at King's.

Feb. 2, 1897 – Leaves for New York to accept job as Editor of *The Illustrated American*.

Oct. 16, 1897 – Son Athelstan dies of meningitis.

Oct. 1898 – Ernest Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I have Known* becomes a best-seller.

March 1903 – John Burroughs famous "Real and Sham Natural History," appears in *The Atlantic*

Monthly.

Oct. 11, 1905 – Rev. George G. Roberts dies.

1906 – UNB awards honorary Doctor of Laws degree to Roberts.

June 1907 – President Roosevelt ends the Nature Fakers debate with a series of articles.

1907 – Roberts sails to Paris. He will travel throughout Europe, but not return to Canada for the next 18 years.

Sept. 1914 – Joins the Legion of Frontiersmen to participate in the Great War.

Dec. 9, 1914 – Receives commission as first Lieutenant in the 16th Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment.

1916 – Transfers to the Canadian Overseas Forces as a Major working in the War Records Office.

1916 – Heads to the front lines as Special Press Correspondent to the Canadian Corps.

1921 – J.M. Dent & Sons start rereleasing Roberts's stories in cheap paperback editions targeted at Children. His sales were declining across the board.

Feb. 27, 1923 – Emma Roberts Dies.

Feb. 5, 1925 – First lecture at Jarvis Collegiate marks his return to Canada and the kick off of his first lecture tour.

May 1925 – Rents the Apartment in the Ernescliffe building in Toronto, where Roberts will spend the rest of his life.

1926 – Wins the first ever Lorne Pierce Medal for Canadian Literature.

July 1926- Delivers 4 lectures at Dr. Aletta E. Marty's Summer School of Canadian Literature and meets future biographer Elsie Pomeroy.

June 1927 – At Canadian Author's Association convention he was elected National President.

June 1929 – Bliss Carman Roberts's cousin and best friend dies.

Oct. 1931 – Canadian Writer's Foundation Fund arranges a pension for Roberts. Helped along by fellow New Brunswicker, fan, and Prime Minister, R.B. Bennett.

July 1, 1933 – Canadian Authors Tour of Britain leaves for England.

June 3, 1935 – Public announcement of Roberts's knighthood.

1939 – Pomeroy begins work on *Sir Charles G.D. Roberts: A Biography*.

1938-42 – Roberts begins working on poetry in support of the Allied war effort releasing two collections.

Oct. 28, 1943 – Marries Joan Montgomery aged 33.

Nov. 26, 1943 – Dies in Toronto at the age of 83.

Appendix B

An Abridged Bibliography of Roberts's Prose Work

- The Raid from Beausejour*. New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1894.
- Reube Dare's Shad Boat*. New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895.
- Around the Camp-Fire*. Toronto: Briggs, 1896.
- Earth's Enigmas*. Boston: Lamson, 1896.
- The Forge in the Forest*. Toronto: Briggs, 1896.
- A Sister to Evangeline*. Toronto: Morang & co., 1899.
- By the Marshes of Minas*. Toronto: Briggs, 1900.
- The Heart of the Ancient Wood*. Toronto: Copp, Clark co., 1901.
- Barbara Ladd*. Toronto: Copp, Clark co., 1902.
- The Kindred of the Wild*. Toronto: Copp, Clark & co. 1902.
- The Prisoner of Mademoiselle*. Toronto: Copp, Clark & co. 1904.
- The Watchers of the Trails*. Toronto: Copp, Clark & co. 1904.
- Red Fox*. Boston: L.C. Page & co., 1905.
- The Heart that Knows*. Toronto: Copp, Clark co., 1906.
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