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**The Discourse of Hockey in Canada:
Mythologization, Institutionalization, and Cultural Dissemination**

by

**Kerry Noonan,
Bachelor of Science in English**

**A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
in Canadian Studies**

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

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**The undersigned recommend to the Faculty
of Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis**

**“Discourse of Hockey in Canada: Mythologization,
Institutionalization and Cultural Dissemination”**

submitted by Kerry Noonan, B.S. in English

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that hockey in Canada is a social construction with a set of meanings and myths which link it inseparably to Canadian culture as a whole, and often to what it is to be identified as Canadian. It proves that hockey is a ritualized Canadian social institution upheld by a set of culturally specific myths which have been appropriated by the discourse of Canadian hockey, normalized and legitimized by that discourse, and then disseminated through media which are not relegated solely to the confines of the “popular” or “mass” cultures, but also to the “high” cultures of literature, art, and music, which contribute in turn to the reinforcement of the cultural mythos.

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Introduction

Noam Chomsky, a social theorist and critic questioned his relationship to sports:

I remember in high school . . . I suddenly asked myself at one point, "Why do I care if my high school team wins the football game? I mean, I don't know anybody on the team. They have nothing to do with me. Why am I cheering for my team?"¹

For Chomsky and millions of others in western societies especially, attachment to a sports team is extremely common, but it is something which sports fans seldom question. One wears jerseys, baseball caps, and tee-shirts in the colors of his/her favorite team to demonstrate his/her identification with it, yet one rarely has any physical connection with that team at all. Most often the relationship is only one of spectatorship and any sort of identification is an imagined or constructed one.

¹ Peter Wintonick, and Mark Achbar, Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1994) 92.

Moving from academic social theory to popular culture, the comedian Jerry Seinfeld responded to a sports fanatic who acclaimed "We won" after the game with the observation, "Wrong. They won — you watched" (qtd. in P. White).² It is not uncommon to cheer for "our" football team or "our" hockey team, even though, like Chomsky, we usually do not even know the players, and like Seinfeld, we are simply spectators at best. Yet, at sporting events the team is frequently introduced to the attending fans in familiar terms, as though the players are the crowd's old friends and as though the attendees have an ownership in the team.

"It is no coincidence that we are introduced at the Skydome to 'your' Toronto Blue Jays" pointed out Philip White (19). Doing so makes the fans feel a sense of proprietary ownership, as though they have a stake in the outcome, and it makes them want to pay greater attention to the team's progress throughout the season. In some ways this is a marketing strategy, cleverly planned to induce fans to want to buy tickets to watch "their" team, but it goes far beyond that into the realm of cultural reasoning — or why a culture does what it does. It is a matter of what a culture deems to be important and what a culture chooses to conventionalize.

Chomsky and Seinfeld's social critiques can be seen as existing on a much larger scale than one man and one team. They both question why it is that any of us in society feel any sort of connection to sports or to a specific sports team, and also what it is that sports do for society and for individuals

² Philip White, "Sports: Why Do We Care So Much?" Taking Sport Seriously: Social Issues in Canadian Sport, Ed. Peter Donnelly (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc., 1997).

within that society.

Hockey in Canada is a particular example of this phenomenon. Long called “Canada’s game,” or possessively, “our game,” the game of hockey is intimately tied to Canadian culture and even Canadian cultural identity. There is no disputing the fact that the game of hockey was invented by Canadians on Canadian soil, that the first organized games and the first leagues were Canadian, that all the players were for a long time Canadian even after the game went international, and that hockey has been more popular in Canada — and for a longer time — than anywhere else. Because of these facts, because hockey is Canadian and has been around so long in Canada, and because it grew as a natural occurrence out of the hearts and lands of Canadians, the game is entrenched in the culture of Canada and has infiltrated many aspects of that culture, from high to low arts and everything in between.

In 1875, a ragtag group of McGill University students exhibited the first organized and publicized game of hockey, and the game quickly grabbed the attention and imagination of Canadians from coast-to-coast. Although that first exhibition holds little resemblance to the one currently popular, hockey as a sport and as an idea has consistently remained an integral part of the Canadian cultural landscape and national discourse. Essentially, the discourse of hockey has become a Canadian cultural institution, not a physical institution like a museum, but rather an ideological institution created and upheld by the normalization of the hockey mythos.

The question that remains for this thesis is not *is* hockey Canadian, but rather *how* is hockey Canadian? How is hockey an aspect of Canadian culture, and what does hockey mean to Canada? Delving further, what are the specific myths which uphold hockey as a Canadian national ritual, and how are those myths disseminated?

This thesis will argue that hockey in Canada is a social construction with a set of meanings and myths which link it inseparably to Canadian culture as a whole, and often to what it is to be identified as Canadian. It will prove that hockey is a ritualized Canadian social institution upheld by a set of culturally specific myths which have been appropriated by the discourse of Canadian hockey, normalized and legitimized by that discourse, and then disseminated through media which are not relegated solely to the confines of the “popular” or “mass” cultures, but also to the “high” cultures of literature, art, and music, which contribute in turn to the reinforcement of the cultural mythos. Although discussing a national phenomenon and touching slightly on the French-Canadian relationship to the game of hockey, this thesis is primarily focused on the English-Canadian discourse of hockey and the myths contained therein.

Chapter One will define the meaning of sport in society by looking at how sport is institutionalized and how myths become part of that social process. A discussion of general theories will provide the most effective basis from which to continue. By surveying some of the basic ideas in the sociology and anthropology of sport to show the relationship between sport and society, sport will be positioned within a cultural framework which will be a foundation for the

cultural study that will follow. It needs to be determined what it is that sport does for society and for individuals, what its purpose is as an aspect of culture, and how sport both is influenced by and influences the rest of culture. From the general analysis of sport in culture, it will be possible to determine hockey's position within Canadian culture according to established theory.

Chapter Two will explore the idea that hockey is upheld by a mythos of five prevailing myths. Often these are blended and intertwined in a sort of generic "hockey is Canadian" sentiment — the common discourse — but examples of each can be found manifested in various mediums in Canadian culture. The first myth is hockey as historical tradition in Canada. Second is the myth of hockey as the one common coin that binds Canada from coast to coast. The third myth is hockey as an extension of the Canadian landscape. Then, fourth is the myth of hockey as pastoral tradition. Finally, the fifth myth is that of the hockey hero as a cultural icon.

After defining the myths, it then becomes necessary in Chapter Three to break from theory to observe practical application of the myths and to explore the discourse of hockey in Canada in terms of how the myths are used and promoted in Canadian cultural production. The five myths, even though they often seem so simplistic and overly-romanticized, even sentimental, are applied in popular Canadian life on a regular basis defying the bounds of high and low culture. Hockey is found in literature, in art, and in music, as well as in mass culture. It is these media which will be a major focus of this thesis because they are the principal methods by which all myths are maintained,

promoted, and expressed. In this chapter, specific pieces of fiction and non-fiction, art, and music will be discussed. This will have the purpose of showing that the mythos is not merely theoretical, but something tangible, widespread, and accessible. It will also prove that there is a mythos of hockey which leads directly to the popular discourse "Hockey is Canadian." It will ultimately answer the question, how is hockey Canadian?

CHAPTER ONE INVESTIGATING SPORT

Historical Aspects: High vs. Low Culture

Academia has long had difficulty accepting the value of popular or mass culture. Most scholars, especially in the past, simply choose to focus on culture as something which fosters supposed intellectual growth, or in other words, the high arts. It is an elitist phenomenon — the belief that everything to do with popular culture is “tasteless and vulgar,” and, of course, low brow.³ This applies to spectator sports, which have been seen to be the epitome of all that is wrong with popular culture. They are “too closely tied to popular tastes, too centered on the body rather than the mind, too rooted in local passions, and too closely connected to the sensuous worlds of drink and gambling”.⁴

³ Paul Litt, “The Massey Commission, Americanization, and Canadian Cultural Nationalism,” *Queen’s Quarterly* (98:2, Summer 1991) 380.

⁴ Richard Gruneau, and David Whitson, Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities and Cultural Politics (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993) 273.

Recently, however, scholars have begun to recognize the importance of the popular to the structure of society as a “social phenomenon,” and have begun to redefine culture along a more anthropologic framework which says that culture is a “way of life”.⁵ After condoning the study of mass/popular culture for decades, academia is now recognizing the importance of all levels of culture — high, low, mass, and folk — to the study of culture as a whole. The relationship between the different levels of culture is circular and symbiotic. Edwin H. Cady says “there may be a linked progression in which materials, themes, ideas, impulses move from folk art, thence to public ‘high’ art and in turn to high ‘private’ art — and then back to folk art again”.⁶ Recognizing the validity of each of these cultural arenas in an equal fashion is a holistic approach to the definition of culture which has redefined “culture” from an upper class aesthetic ideal. From this point of view, it is impossible to separate aspects of culture from one another and to compartmentalize culture hierarchically, for everything in culture is interrelated and mutually dependent.

Nevertheless, this has not always been the attitude of sociologists and anthropologists, and it is helpful to see what some have concluded in order to illustrate a historical progression. Two of the most elitist anti-sports figures in the disciplines are Jay B. Nash and Thorstein Veblen. Nash was a professor of Education at New York University in the 1930s who became concerned with the advent of leisure-time among the masses and the ways they were using it.

⁵ Ann Hall, Trevor Slack, Garry Smith, and David Whitson, Sport in Canadian Society (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Inc., 1991) 30.

⁶ Edwin H. Cady, “Pop Art and the American Dream,” Sport Inside Out: Readings in Literature and Philosophy, Eds. David L. Vanderwerken and Spencer K. Wertz (Fort Worth: Texas Christian UP, 1985) 199-200.

Veblen is well-known as an American political theorist, economist, anthropologist, sociologist, and leisure satirist.

In 1938, Nash wrote *Spectatoritis*, a title he coined to describe the new spread of leisure-time and passive spectatorship in the early twentieth century. He says that Americans had been longing for leisure, but because of a protestant work ethic and the simple lack of time, they did not have any leisure until the dawn of the Machine Age.⁷ Instead of taking advantage of leisure time, however, Nash believed that “the average man who has time on his hands turns out to be a spectator, a watcher of somebody else, merely because that is the easiest thing”.⁸ Nash calls this disease of laziness “spectatoritis,” which he defines as “a blanket description to cover all kinds of passive amusement, an entering into the handiest activity merely to escape boredom. Instead of expressing, he is willing to sit back and have his leisure time pursuits slapped on him like mustard plasters — external, temporary and, in the end, ‘dust in the mouth’” (5). As Garry Smith explains, “Implicit in this statement is the value judgment that if the person could develop new standards or a higher level of taste he or she could be more fulfilled and could make a greater contribution to

⁷ The Machine Age was “a period of sweeping technological changes stretching roughly between 1914 and 1939 [which] rocked the world into the future,” according to Diffrient. Wilson, Pilgrim, and Tashjian add that this was a time when “machines and their products increasingly pervaded all aspects of American life. This new consciousness implied a whole new culture that could be built as readily as the machine . . .”

David Scott Diffrient, rev. of “A Distant Technology: Science Fiction Film and the Machine Age,” by J.P. Telotte, *Film Quarterly* 54 (Fall 2000) Infotrac Reference Center Gold, Capital Area District Library, Williamston, Michigan, 24 Sept. 2001: 42.

Richard Guy Wilson, Dianne H. Pilgrim, and Dickran Tasjian, rev. of “Machine Age America 1918-1941 (Brooklyn Museum, New York),” *Progressive Architecture*, 67 (Nov. 1986) Infotrac Reference Center Gold, Capital Area District Library, Williamston, Michigan, 24 Sept. 2001: n. pag.

⁸ Jay B. Nash, *Spectatoritis* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1938) 5.

society".⁹ In other words, those individuals who watch sports passively are not only wasting their own time, but are basically a waste to society as a whole. Nash believes that sport is a worthless activity that encourages worthless spectators.

In addition to causing worthlessness, being a mere spectator also keeps one from happiness, says Nash:

The happy man, the healthy man, the normal man and the busy man are one, busy but not cramped, active but with sufficient glide for recuperation. . . . From this great world the spectator must be excluded. He has built the wall between himself and happiness. He must go round and round in endless flight. This endless flight is characterized by physical exhaustion, where he finds it impossible to stop. He can not arrive and there is no joy in the process. The doer, the creator, the hobbyist, keeps pursuing; he never arrives. (282-283)

It is evident that Nash believes very strongly in the value of labor. He sees no honor at all in spectatorship, and expresses beliefs that those who become mere spectators will spend a lifetime of wanderlust, never being able to find the happiness that one can only find through honest labor. He ends his book with the following quotation: "true success is to labor" (284). Veblen expressed similar sentiments about the dishonor of sport spectatorship. He said for a man to follow athletics "marks an arrested development of the man's

⁹ Garry J. Smith, "The Noble Sports Fan," Sport in Contemporary Society: An Anthology, Ed. D. Stanley Eitzen, 4th ed., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) 12.

moral nature.”¹⁰ Smith says that this “is still used as a battle cry by the tiny aristocracy that tries to impose these artificial standards on the masses” (13). Veblen also links sports to immaturity and to man’s return to a primitive barbaric state. John Patrick Diggins says, “of all the predatory sports[,] football seemed to Veblen the clearest example of a return to *ferae natura*” — a wild animal nature (18). Sport was not seen by Veblen to be even worthy of humanity. It was an activity only for the lowbrow culture of the uncivilized masses. It follows that from this viewpoint watching sports is considerably lower on a hierarchy than other cultural activities such as attending an opera or a symphony.

Not everyone has approached the academic study of sport with the same attitude as Nash and Veblen. Especially in the discipline of anthropology, sport received scholarly study as early as the nineteenth century. The father of anthropology, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, conducted many studies of a variety of sports and games played in a number of social groups around the world, some of which are found in his 1879 publication, “The History of Games.”¹¹ Tylor saw a relationship between sport and games and larger cultural processes.¹²

However, the problem with Tylor’s work in a modern setting, even though many of his findings are still important to the study of sport in society, is that, as

¹⁰ John Patrick Diggins, Thorstein Veblen: Theorist of the Leisure Class (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999) 19.

¹¹ Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, “The History of Games,” The Fortnightly Review [London] 25 (Jan. 1-June 1, 1879) 735-747.

¹² Kendall Blanchard, The Anthropology of Sport: An Introduction, Revised ed. (Westport, Conn.: Belgin & Harvey, 1995) 11.

Blanchard points out, "it did not generate a theoretical framework within which future studies of sport and games could be constructively conducted" (11). Tylor, and the small handful of other anthropologists at the time who contributed anything to the discourse of sport study, did not put forth any theory with which to work. Sport was most often given a secondary interest within larger anthropological studies, with only a few exceptions.

It was not until the late 1950s and early 1960s that sport started to become a legitimate focus of academia. One of the most important events was the 1959 publication of "Games in Culture" by John M. Roberts, Malcolm J. Arth, and Robert R. Bush.¹³ This article for the first time attempted to systematically organize games, and apply the systems to a large supply of data. This study was a considerable catalyst for discussion and for focusing the attention of many anthropologists on the study of sports and games (18).

The cultural anthropologists Florence Stumpf (later Fredrickson) and Frederick W. Cozens also had a large impact on the study of sport. They believed that part of the legacy of cultural anthropology is to teach tolerance of the pleasures of others, which include sports and games (Blanchard *Anthropology* 23). However, they recognized that in cultural history there is a definite lack of acknowledgement of the value of sport, which they attributed to the common belief that sports are not important contributors to society.¹⁴ They

¹³ Roberts, John M., Malcolm J. Arth and Robert R. Bush, "Games in culture" (*American Anthropologist*, 61: 1959) 579-605.

¹⁴ A.S. Daniels, "The Study of Sport as an Element of Culture," *Sport, Culture and Society: A Reader on the Sociology of Sport*, Eds. John W. Loy, Jr. and Gerald S. Kenyon (London: The Macmillan Company, 1969) 13.

expressed the belief that “sports and games provide a touchstone for understanding how people live, work, and think, and may also serve as a barometer of a nation’s progress in civilization” (14). Instead of being anti-civilized, as Veblen suggested, Stumpf and Cozens indicated that they saw sports as actually promoting civilization by being models of the larger society and means by which to gain an understanding of that society. Therefore, sports do not prove simply that people are lazy, unhappy, or animalistic, but instead are indicative of culture.

1.2

Sport Creating and Created-By Cultural Meanings

Within the holistic framework pioneered by Stumpf, Cozens and others and now accepted by most sociologists and anthropologists, sports are seen to play an integral role in culture. They are intimately related to all other aspects of a culture and society, both influencing and being influenced by such things as politics, economics, social structure, foreign policy, technology, art, science, music, education, the military, and literature (Daniels 16). David Jary and Julia Jary have defined the modern role of sociology in the study of sport to include this framework:

The sociology of sport is concerned with the relationship between sport and other social institutions (the family, education, politics, and the economy), the social organization, social relations and group behaviour associated with different types of sport (e.g. elite or mass, amateur and

professional, the class, gender or race relations that sport involves), and the social processes (such as ideological incorporation) that occur in conjunction with sport.¹⁵

Everything in culture is inter-related, interdependent and circular, including sport. Culture, in this perspective, is “the symbolic forms and the everyday practices through which people express and experience meaning” (Hall et al. 31). In the activities, symbols, myths, beliefs, and values of a culture, meaning is shrouded. Behind everything there is reason and tradition.

Sport, as culture, is both a “symbolic form” that allows people to “experience meaning,” and simultaneously a means by which cultural meanings, in the form of a cultural mythos, are created. It works both ways — created by and creating meanings — because sport is something which does not exist separately from society. It is intricately woven into the threads of culture and the social order, and is maintained through a system of mythologies, images, and meanings. Alan Clarke and John Clarke wrote, “Sport as an activity, or an object of interest, is socially constructed; it is defined and given meaning. It is these meanings which give us the value of being involved in sport — they provide us with identities and identifications.”¹⁶ What makes a sport popular goes beyond the logistics of the game itself. It is not necessarily that people simply enjoy watching a piece of frozen black rubber

¹⁵ David Jary, and Julia Jary, Collins Dictionary of Sociology (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1995) 635.

¹⁶ Alan Clarke, and John Clarke, “‘Highlights and Action Replays’ — Ideology, Sport and the Media,” Sport, Culture and Ideology, Ed. Jennifer Hargreaves (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) 62.

being swatted around, for example; they enjoy their perception of the players undertaking to control the course of that physical object, what that means to them, and what ideas and images it connotes beyond the physical moment. These images can be on a very individual level, such as personal memories of playing the sport, or can be broad social images which contribute to society and to the system of myths of that society.

1.3

Sport as a Cultural Institution

These meanings and myths encourage sport to become a cultural institution, where some of the images of the puck on the ice, for example, are socialized, institutionalized, and naturalized. Some institutions are physicalities that one can see and touch, that are upheld with brick and concrete, and that include such things as hospitals, schools, and churches. There are other institutions, just as common in society, which have no walls and no solidity. These *social* or *cultural* institutions are upheld through societal myths, and include in Emile Durkheim's definition, "all the beliefs and modes of conduct instituted by the collectivity" (qtd. in Calvert 57).¹⁷

Defining "myths" is a challenging task. As used here, myths are a normalized set of thematics that are applied to varying stories or cultural expressions. As defined by Lenk, myth "designates a model symbolizing

¹⁷ Randall L. Calvert, "Rational Acts, Equilibrium, and Social Institutions," Explaining Social Institutions, Eds. Jack Knight and Itai Sened (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

normative designs, projections, and valuations and how they have developed historically in the cultural tradition.”¹⁸ They differ from ideologies, which are cognitive systems for looking at the world. Myths are more normalized and internalized and are interpreted by the consumer in a “causal-naturalistic way” and are understood “as a system of facts” (437). Referring to myth as fact seems ironic, but the internalized, naturalized nature of myth makes it seem factual to the consumer, while not necessarily being factual or unfactual when explored. As Barthes says, “myth is understood as a system of facts, although it represents only a semiological system” (qtd. in Lenk 437).¹⁹

The semilogic of myth is important because it allows myth to defy the bounds of truth. Myths are understood and normalized as fact, but the actuality of truth is unnecessary. Was Helen of Troy really so beautiful as to cause a war and launch a thousand ships? It hardly matters to the power of the myth. Myths are stories and folklores — a discourse — that is retold, changed to fit the environment, and exaggerated over time. Maurice Libby said, “All folklore [is] based on undeniable proof. The more the stories get retold, the more elaborate they get and the more romantic they get; but there is a core of truth to the whole thing.”²⁰ Walter Lippmann suggests the same idea:

The distinguishing mark of a myth is that truth and error, fact and fable, report and fantasy, are all on the same plane of credibility. The myth is, then, not necessarily false. It might happen to be wholly true. It may happen to be partly true. What a myth never contains is the critical power

¹⁸ Lenk, Hans, “Hurculean ‘Myth’ Aspects of Athletics,” Sport Inside Out: Readings in Literature and Philosophy (Fort Worth: Texas Christian UP, 1985) 437.

¹⁹ Conveniently located in Lenk. Barthes, R., Mythen des Alltags (Frankfurt, 1964.)

²⁰ Maurice Libby, Interview, Tunnels of Vice and Virture, CPAC, 9 Sept. 2001.

to separate its truths from its errors. (qtd. in Simpson 214)²¹

The power of myth, then, is not found in actual truth, but is rather found in its ability to be part of a normalized system of culture. It is myth which forms the basis for social institutions.

Traditionally, social institutions include the family, religion, education, the economy, and government — establishments which have a commonly recognized structure and which are maintained through social knowledge. For example, in the western world we are socialized to know what we think of as the traditional family institution and how it is to be structured, a patriarchal organization in which a male and female who are recognized as a couple by the state live with one or more children who are their own through birth. We have a set of myths which maintain that conceptualization, regardless of whether that is the truth of many North American families. The beliefs change from culture to culture, such that in some cultures a family could consist of a mother and father who are not married, who live in separate households, or who raise the children of other community-members. Many other things can be institutions, as well, including a sport like hockey, a ceremony like a wedding, or a figure like the President of the United States.

Jeffrey E. Nash and James M. Calonico outline some guidelines about institutions:

- Institutions are founded on human knowledge.
- All social phenomena, including institutions, depend on constant

²¹ Jeffrey Simpson, Faultlines: Struggling for a Canadian Vision (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1993).

application.

- As a consequence of being knowledge systems that depend on constant application, institutions are open to outside influences.²²

In other words, myths are mostly-unconscious, socialized beliefs and meanings that permeate society to the point that they are naturalized. Explaining Nash and Calonico's outline further, to say that institutions are founded on human knowledge is to say that they are based on mythologies, or a set of beliefs, stories, and ideas that individuals know and recognize. To maintain a stable condition, the human knowledge must be applied constantly, such that the stories are retold, the beliefs are expressed in varied ways, and the necessary actions are done as often as needed. Because of these conditions, institutions can be influenced by new ways of thinking, by changes in social morals and norms, and by different types of behavior. This is why societies are capable of changing through time and are not static.

An understanding of institutions can be based on the work of Mary Douglas. She "argues that institutions are composed *both* of structures *and* their legitimizing myths."²³ The relationship between myth and institutions has been deemed to be much like that between algae and fungi, which "live in symbiosis" and cannot exist without the other (Vickers 187). In *How Institutions Think*, Douglas contends that institutions are as much based on an intellectual process as an economic or political one,²⁴ meaning that they are legitimized

²² Jeffrey E. Nash, and James M. Calonico, Institutions in Modern Society: Meanings, Forms, and Character (Dix Hills, NY: General Hall, Inc., 1993) 8-10.

²³ Jill Vickers, "Notes Toward a Political Theory of Sex and Power," Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice, Eds. H. Lorraine Radtke and Henderikus J. Stam (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 1994) 187.

²⁴ Mary Douglas, How Institutions Think (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986) 45.

through myths that are based on human knowledge, thus agreeing with Nash and Calónico.

Important issues to consider are how institutions are formed and from where they come. Construction of an institution involves a process whereby individuals within a society analyze all the analogies, images, meaning-sets and/or myths with which they come in contact on a daily basis, and then they create a system of classification for those myths. The analogies are organized into systems which are judged to have qualities of sameness. As Douglas says, "socially based analogies assign disparate items to classes and load them with moral and political content" (63). To the system of myths/analogies which are classified in terms of sameness is added a sort of personalized cultural baggage, or a "feeling." In other words, the system starts to *mean* something to the individuals and to the society. That is what creates an institution.

Legitimized by myth, the institutions are also naturalized, and the two — legitimacy and naturalization — are tied together much like the proverbial algae and fungi. "To acquire legitimacy, every kind of institution needs a formula that founds its rightness in reason and in nature" (45). In the legitimizing and naturalizing process, Douglas goes on to say that institutionalization occurs "when, in reply to the question, 'Why do you do it like this?' . . . the final answer refers to the way the planets are fixed in the sky or the way that plants or humans or animals naturally behave" (46-47). In other words, institutionalization is so legitimized and naturalized that it is next-to-impossible

to see it as a construction. It is so much a part of our lives that we see an institution to be as natural as the sunrise or as the lion's roar. As an example, when someone asks, "why is hockey Canadian," the answer often is "because hockey is in a Canadian's blood; it is as natural to Canada as the North Star in the sky."

An institution is basically a convention, or a rule of conduct that is established and agreed upon. David Lewis believes that "a convention arises when all parties have a common interest, and none has a conflicting interest, and none will deviate lest the desired coordination is lost" (qtd. in Douglas 46). Therefore, in order for an institution to exist in a stable state, it must be normalized, naturalized, and conventionalized. It is something which individuals agree upon, though not necessarily consciously. It is evident in the way they behave, in the things they say, and in the way they think.

The next question of importance is then how does sport fit into this? Sport is a cultural institution. Sport in general and specific types of sport in particular are all upheld to varying degrees by differing classifications of myth. In Chapter Two, some of the myths which form the institution of hockey in Canada will be explored. These are the same sort of myths or analogies which Douglas established to be the basis of institutionalization.

Sport as Ritual

In addition to being a cultural institution, sport is a ritualized part of culture. The theory of sport as ritual is a contested debate among social scientists, with the center of the debate generally lying on the differentiation between defining ritual in the traditional, religious sense, and in a secular sense. S. Moore and B. Meyerhoff define secular rituals as "those 'formal acts which deal with or refer to postulated matters about society or ideology'" (qtd. in Blanchard, *Sport* 48),²⁵ and in using this definition many things, including sport, are incorporated. Secular ritual includes even such everyday functions as eating, drinking, working, and brushing teeth.

While some sociologists, such as Moore and Meyerhoff, prefer to label sports as "secular rituals," thus avoiding the ritual associated with traditional religion, others make a direct link of sport to religion. The founder of the modern Olympic games, Pierre de Coubertin, said "the first essential characteristic of ancient and of modern Olympism alike is that of being a religion" (qtd. in Korsgaard 115).²⁶

Blanchard disagrees that sport is ritual at all. He cites the competitive

²⁵ Kendall Blanchard, "Sport and Ritual — A Conceptual Dilemma," Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 52:5 (Nov.-Dec., 1988).

See Moore, S. & B. Meyerhoff, Eds., Secular Ritual (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977).

²⁶ Ore Korsgaard, "Sport as a Practice of Religion: The Record as Ritual," Ritual and Record: Sports Records and Quantification in Pre-Modern Societies, Eds. John Marshall Carter and Arnd Kruger (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

See Pierre de Coubertin, "Det filosofiske grundlag for moderne Olympisme," The Olympic Idea (Stuttgart: Karl Hoffman, 1967).

nature of sport as an inhibitor to ritual. "Its major objective is success, and success in a game means winning, not achieving some ritualistic goals" (*Sport* 52). However, this opinion ignores that sport is not always necessarily a competitive venture. A group of friends gathering for a game of street hockey are there more often for the fun of the game and the joy of being with friends than to win no-holds-barred. They are not out to receive a paycheck at the end, nor a trophy, nor anything but a few friendly slaps on the back. It is a winter ritual.

Cannot the competitive nature of sport become a ritual in itself? The meetings between rival teams, such as historic rivals Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens, which are highly anticipated by the players, the fans, the media, and others, are ritualistic in themselves. The excitement for these games is often heightened leading up to the game as fans and journalists debate the possible outcome, as fans arrive at the arena and cheer a little bit louder for their team, as participants ritualistically recall past tournaments, and as merchants promote the sale of team tee-shirts and the like that perhaps even commemorate the rivalry at hand. The competition is a ritual that all participants expect each year and look forward to in anticipation. Participants recognize their role in the ceremony, as players, as fans, as journalists, and even as merchandise-sellers who may try to cash-in on the ritual. This is certainly a civic ritual, despite its base in competition.

A relevant example provided by Florence Stumpf Fredrickson is that of college sports in the United States, which she claims are more than just

games.²⁷ While the model of college sports used is specific to the U.S., Fredrickson's illustrations are easily paralleled to junior hockey in Canada. She says that while many refuse to accept that sport is ritual, they ignore some of the facets of the game that go beyond what the "skeptics [view as] the 'facts' — that such contests are business enterprises, staged for profit, and far removed from any comparison with ancient or archaic times" (433). One of the examples she cites is that of the alumnus who follows his college team to maintain a link to the life he led while there. It is a method of living vicariously through contact with the current college team.

Another of Fredrickson's examples is that of the stadium or arena in which the college team plays. "Why are the football stadiums not demolished to make room for laboratories of science and research, and for conventional classrooms?" she asks (433). Besides the fact that football, in the U.S., brings a tremendous amount of money to a college, the reason is that the stadium is representational of the ritual which takes place within. "Each one has a personal history, and while each means many different things to different people, a stadium always stands as a symbol of man's love of a contest, spectacularly staged" (433). While a church is honored for its role as the house of the religious ritual that takes place within its walls, the stadium or arena is likewise honored for the secular ritual — that is no less ritualistic — that takes place within the concrete fortress.

²⁷ Fredrickson, Florence Stumpf, "Sports and the Cultures of Man," Sport and Medicine of Exercise and Sport, Eds. Warren B. Johnson and E.R. Buskirk, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974) 433.

There are many examples in Canada of hockey arenas that are treated with the status of a religious temple, with the Montreal Forum as the equivalent of the Sistine Chapel. As Anouk Bélanger says:

On dit souvent que le hockey au Québec est comme une sorte de religion. De fait, le Forum de Montréal a été élevé, dans l'imaginaire québécois, au titre de «Temple du hockey». On dit également que la bâtisse était hantée par tous les héros des générations précédentes, «les bras meurtris, tendant le flambeau» aux joueurs actuels pour qu'ils continuent de porter bien haute la flamme du hockey. (16)²⁸

More than bricks and mortar, the Forum is representative of the physicalization of Québec's cultural history and public memory. In 1952, words from the poem "In Flanders Fields," by John McCrae, were painted in French and English onto the walls of the Forum dressing room emphasizing the historical and ongoing relationship between the hockey team and the community. The imagery of the poem — the passing of the torch — became part of the legend of the Canadiens. Part of the ritual of hockey is passing the torch from one generation of players to the next, and the continuation of the game across the years.

Where the ritualization of sport is obvious is in its repetition. After all, a ritual is something predictable, something that its participants recognize, and something that is a custom. The professional hockey season, readying one's

²⁸ Anouk Bélanger, "Les Forum est Mort . . . Vive le Temple de la Bonne Bière," Canadian Issues Themes Canadiens (Autumn 1999) 16.

Translation: "They often say that hockey in Québec is like a sort of religion. The Montreal Forum was elevated, in the Quebecois imagination, to the title of 'Hockey Temple.' They say, equally, that the building was haunted by all of the heroes from previous generations — 'arms failing, throwing the torch' to the current players so they can continue to hold the hockey flame high.

hockey skates as the weather starts to turn wintry, the parading of the Stanley Cup each spring, the singing of the national anthem before each contest — these are ritual activities which are recognized, repeated, and celebrated. The dictionary perhaps provides the best definition for ritual: “a customarily repeated often formal act or action.”²⁹ This is what sport is.

The sociologist David Chaney has studied rituals in society and has proposed that “the essence of ritual is that collective identities are postulated and publicly celebrated that might otherwise have only an ambiguous social existence.”³⁰ This is definitely true of hockey, which has been one of Canada’s most powerful national rituals. However, not everyone participates in the ritual. Chaney adds, “this does not mean that all participants in the ritual will be equally convinced of its truth” (120). An example would be that hockey is a strong cultural institution in Canada, but not all Canadians are hockey fans. Hockey is likely to somehow touch the lives of most Canadians because the prevalence of the hockey discourse makes it hard to escape, but it is certainly possible that someone could ignore the presence of the discourse.

²⁹ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed., 1993, 1011.

³⁰ David Chaney, “A Symbolic Mirror of Ourselves: Civic Ritual in Mass Society,” Media, Culture and Society, 5 (1983) 120.

Sport as a Nation-Builder

This brings about the idea of sport as an important aspect of the nation-building process. Ritual, both civic and religious, is a catalyst for creating a collective identity because it brings people together in an act of sameness and of commonality. Ritual combined with cultural institutions, culturally-specific meanings, and a set of cultural myths is the formula for nationalism. As Chaney says, "A nation is an abstract collectivity because it is too big a social entity to be experienced by an individual. Therefore the 'we-feeling' of the community has to be continually engendered by opportunities for identification as the nation is being manufactured" (121). Hans Gerth and Wright Mills concur: "A nation becomes 'one and indivisible' through a continual process of communalization'" (qtd. in Chaney 121).³¹ Chaney cites examples of historical achievements, past triumphs, a common mission, and a feeling of national grandeur. One could also correctly cite sport as a means to create community.

The idea here is one of representation, with the sports team being a representative of a community. "Representation' — whether it is used in the Durkheimian sense of an organically produced signifying practice that binds people together as a 'we', or in the more typical sense of an agent/agency acting on behalf of the community — presumes bonds of sentiment and loyalty

³¹ See Hans Gerth, and Wright Mills, Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953) 296-297.

among the sign, the symbol, the agent, and the collectivity."³² The representational power of sport gives rise to a sport-based nationalism that is expressed not only within a culture, but as a symbol of that culture to outsiders. Eric Hobsbawm cites the examples of soccer in England, rugby in Wales, and Gaelic football in Ireland³³ — sports which outsiders associate with those particular nations and which take on a representative role for those national cultures.

The phenomenon of representation first began to happen in Canada as hockey took on a professionalized inter-city league format. Before inter-city play, teams with names like Caledonians, Shamrocks, and Italia often represented a single ethnic group and reinforced differences. With increasing inter-city competition, though, teams took over popularity who were supposed to be representative of the city as a whole. Cities which were made up mostly of loose collaborations of different ethnic groups and neighborhoods began to have a single agent in the face of other city teams, and teams began to claim to represent their city. As an example, Edmonton was a city strongly divided by ethnic lines, but which embraced the representation of a single all-encompassing hockey team. Whitson argues "that inter-city sporting competition helped to inculcate a sense of 'Edmonton-ness' in a population without many other common bonds, and it might be argued that the league format of professional sports made for a series of civic rituals, in which

³² David Whitson, "Hockey and Popular Culture: The Making and Remaking of Identities," Method and Methodology in Sport and Cultural History, Ed. K.B. Wamsley (Dubuque, Iowa: Times Mirror Higher Education Group, Inc., 1995) 191.

³³ Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions," The Invention of Tradition, Eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 300.

discourses of civic identity could be constructed and popularized" (*Popular* 191).³⁴

It did not take long from the time that the teams began to take on a representational character that they started to be infused with ritualistic properties. Much of this was created by the media, which had the obvious desire to keep people paying attention and buying the newspaper, so they dramatized the events, promoted a team's identification as "your home team," and turned the players into celebrities and heroes. "Rivalries between teams and cities were quickly invested with historic significance, while reporters vied to tell the 'human interest' stories (a rookie's hopes, an aging veteran's struggle, individual rivalries) that invite fan identifications. Through such story-telling, ordinary men became household names and sometimes heroes, and the events they participated in became part of popular mythology" (193-194). Thus the myths are born which create the institutionalization of the sport. The historical significance is the type of thing which Chaney said is an essential ingredient to communalization. This also helps to form the meanings which people understand to be inherent in sports. In this simple activity is founded the beginnings of national ritual, a sense of nationalism, and a lasting cultural institution.

With the dawn of the national "Hockey Night in Canada" radio broadcasts in 1933, hockey became, as Whitson says, a "national institution" (194). The process of agency, ritual, and myth was recreated by the national community

³⁴ For more, see Carl Betke, "The Social Significance of Sport in the City: Edmonton in the 1920s," *Cities in the West* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975) 211-235.

and the national media, making an institution of hockey in Canada from coast to coast. Hockey began to take on a role as representative of the entire nation, especially as the game became increasingly international in scope. Not only is the game simply the agent of a single city, but of an entire nation; as Donald Macintosh and Donna Greenhorn say, "Sport [and especially hockey] has become a popular and important part of Canadian culture and an acceptable image to present to the world at large."³⁵ Hockey has become one of the agents that represents Canada and Canadian culture to the rest of the world. It is now part of what it means to be Canadian, both to Canadians and to others.

This is all a continuum: individuals begin to feel a connection with a team, the individuals come together as a collective that feels represented by that team, the actions of the community begin to take on a sense of ritual, individuals and collectivities begin to find meaning in sporting events, stories are created that lead to a mythos, from that mythos is constructed a cultural institution, and back again to the beginning as the circle is broadened to the national level.

Conclusions: Coming Full-Circle

Now it is time to come full-circle and return to Noam Chomsky's question, why do I cheer for a team that has nothing to do with me? J.B. Nash would argue that it is simply because spectators are an unhappy, lazy group too dumb to get

³⁵ Donald Macintosh, Donna Greenhorn, "Hockey Diplomacy and Canadian Foreign Policy," Journal of Canadian Studies, 28:2 (Summer 1993) 96.

off the couch and actually participate. Veblen would say it is because we are expressing our animalistic, uncivilized nature. However, in a modern framework of holistic examination of culture and society, the answer lies in cultural choices and socialization.

The answer lies in how individuals choose to be represented on a communal level and how they choose to come together to form a collectivity, as Whitson explained. The answer lies in how individuals and groups create meanings from their life experiences, as well as how sports help them to create meanings in their lives, as illustrated by Clarke and Clarke. The answer lies in how the symbolic meanings evolve into mythologies, and how communities create the institutions which form their society by using those mythologies, as Douglas represented. Then the answer lies in the ways that communities and individuals find comfort in the ritual of the representation, the meanings, the myths, and the institutions which they construct, as Fredrickson showed. Finally, the answer lies in the way that collectives naturalize these processes and create a continuum upon which the relationship between individuals and sport is constructed and maintained.

Chomsky cheers for a team to which he has no connection because the culture to which he subscribes believes that this is an important and necessary activity. Likewise, Canadians express the notion that hockey is Canadian because this is an idea that Canadian culture has cultivated and maintained with continuity.

What has been illustrated in this chapter is how the process which places sport within the cultural framework is created and used. It is clear from these conclusions that mythologies, and especially the set of mythologies that makes up a mythos, are critical to the assessment of how sport is related to culture. Therefore, the next step to understanding the relationship between Canadian culture and hockey is to examine the mythologies. Chapter Two will explore in detail the principal myths, symbols, and meanings which make hockey an integral part of Canadian culture.

CHAPTER TWO THE MYTHS

Introduction

Upon hearing mention of the term "myth," ancient stories of gods and goddesses high atop Mount Olympus come to mind, as do stories of heroes and heroines like Hercules and Athena. However, myths are not simply the legends of old; they are just as important to contemporary society as they were to the ancients. It is only that modern myths have a different content, and modern gods and heroes are of a somewhat different ilk.

Myth is defined as "a popular belief or tradition that has grown up or around something or someone; *esp*: one embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society" (*Merriam-Webster* 770). For these purposes, myth can be seen to be nearly synonymous with discourse. A myth is a discourse which reappears in a consistent manner, which is prevalent throughout the subscribing society, and which is recognizable, though

recognition does not necessarily mean that the mythology is obvious or conscious to its subscribers. Many of those who maintain the discourse do not do so consciously or knowingly because the key to myth and discourse is that it is so common as to become naturalized and normalized.

Dennis Duffy provides an explanation of myth which is helpful here:

Mythology is not used here as a synonym for lies, propaganda or pieties; rather the term refers to a body of symbols and associations that coheres around a set of historical events and comes to take on a life of its own. In time, it is possible for those symbols and associations to interact among themselves in such a way that the public consciousness will refashion the historical events to suit the dynamics of the symbolic structure.³⁶

In this chapter, the mythos associated with the game of hockey in Canada will be explored in detail. Through my research, I have established that there are five major myths that work toward creating and upholding the discourse of hockey as a Canadian institution. Naturally, these are not the only possible discussions, but these are the ones which have been proven to have the most "staying power" and the most profusion in Canadian culture. The five myths are as follows: the myth of hockey's historical presence, the myth of hockey as the common coin, the myth of the Canadian landscape, the myth of a pastoral tradition, and the myth of the hero as a cultural icon.

³⁶ Dennis Duffy, "Upper Canadian Loyatism: What the Textbooks Tell," Journal of Canadian Studies 12 (Spring 1977) 17.

2.1

The Myth of Hockey as a Historical Presence in Canada

The first myth is hockey as an historical presence in Canada. History is nearly as important to the culture of a sport as the equipment used to play it. Every game, every goal, every player is recorded in history as a statistic for the record books. Often the greats — the best players, the most amazing goals, the highest scoring games — are recorded in social history and in the minds of all who were witness. These are the greats that are remembered and discussed for months, years, and sometimes decades to come. To many fans, history is an important facet of the game, and hockey has a long and storied history in Canada.

The word “hockey” itself has an interesting story. From the Germanic language, the root word *hok* or *hak* means a bent or curved piece of wood or metal, according to Gerald Owen.³⁷ One possible origin of the word “hockey” is from the Frankish-German, a language which spread to France and evolved into modern French. Over time the Frankish word *hok* became the French word *hoquet*, which also means a “curved stick,” or more specifically a “shepherd’s crook.” In 1066, invaders from French Normandy crossed the English Channel and conquered what is now England and southern Scotland, bringing with them both French and Frankish words that are still the backbone of the English language. *Hoquet* is not known to be an absolute predecessor of the English

³⁷ Gerald Owen, “The Origins of ‘Hockey’: Behind the Dictionary Definition,” Total Hockey: The Official Encyclopedia of the National Hockey League, Ed. Dan Diamond, 2nd ed. (Kingston, NY: Total Sports Publishing, 2000) 3.

word *hockey*, but it is definitely a relative. The root word could have also come to England from any number of Germanic sources including Scandinavia. Besides the word “hockey,” *hok* is evident in the English word “hook.”

Somewhere along the way, *hok* and *hak* became *hockey* and *hawkey* throughout the English language. Early on, it referred only to a curved stick, just as the root word suggests. However, one of the most prominent English poets of the eighteenth century, William Cowper, wrote in a letter on November 5, 1785, “The boys at Olney [a market town in Buckinghamshire where he lived for 19 years] have likewise a very entertaining sport, which commences annually upon this day; they call it Hockey . . .” (qtd. in Owen 3). While not much is known about this game, it showed no resemblance to modern hockey, as it seemed to be an activity based upon throwing rǫd. However, based on the name and the meaning of the word, scholars assume a crooked stick must have been part of the game.

Nineteenth-century references to *hockey*, either as a game or simply as a stick, appeared in other accounts from throughout England, as well as India and, with the settling of the New World, New England and Canada. In his 1839 book, *Caleb in Town*, the American writer Jacob Abbott included a chapter called “The Hawkies” and wrote: “Now, a hawkey is a small, round stick, about as long as a man’s cane, with a crook in the lower end, so that a boy can hit balls and little stones with it, when lying on the ground. A good hawkey is a great prize for a Boston boy” (qtd. in Owen 3).³⁸ Even the classic *Little Women*

³⁸ Publication details unknown. Probably published, like Abbott’s other works, by Crocker & Brewster of Boston.

by Louisa May Alcott, which was published in 1868, refers to a hockey as a means to rescue a girl who has fallen through the ice: "Laurie lying flat held Amy up by his arm and hockey" (qtd. in Owen 3).³⁹ In these cases, though, the word hockey still had no link to the game as it is now known.

However, in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, English-speaking Canadians began to use the word "hockey" to refer to an on-ice game. The *Kingston Whig-Standard* is credited with the first Canadian reference to hockey of any type in 1843. The Kingston, Ontario newspaper referred to an army officer who played "hockey on ice," (qtd. in Owen 3). This was followed by references of a similar nature in 1846 and 1853 (3). It is theorized that these refer to a form of field hockey played on ice, without skates, but sometimes this citation is used as proof of Kingston's claim to be the birthplace of hockey.

The "birthplace of hockey" is actually a highly contested debate, with the contenders being Kingston, Montreal, and the Halifax-Windsor area of Nova Scotia. According to Gruneau and Whitson, the debate goes back as far as 1942 when the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) published a report called *The Origin of Hockey in Canada* supporting Kingston's claim as the birthplace (31). Kingston-supporters then invited the CAHA and NHL to create a Hockey Hall of Fame in Kingston, but supporters of Halifax and Montreal were enraged and a debate was sparked, with the honor eventually

³⁹ Alcott, Louisa May, Little Women, or, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1868).

going to Toronto.⁴⁰

Some theorists have even suggested that the game of ice hockey was originally pioneered by the British Royal Family. In studying the history of hockey, in 1937, British journalist Ian Gordon wrote:

During the hard winter of 1853, Royal family members attending a house party at the country palace, looking for diversion on the frozen lake on the grounds, decided to play a form of field hockey on ice. Sides were chosen, sticks found and a wooden plug or stopper pried from a barrel was used as a puck. While Queen Victoria and her attendants stood by giving encouragement, officers of the Guards skated over the surface trying to score into a goal protected by the Prince Consort. (qtd. in McFarlane 1) ⁴¹

This is evidence that there were experiments with field hockey-like, shinny-like, hurley-like on-ice games that may have influenced the development of the game of ice hockey. However, contrary to what Gordon and McFarlane suggest, this does not provide verification of the "invention" of the game. This was a one time, haphazard, and impromptu event. There were no written rules and formal

⁴⁰ There is, however, an International Hockey Museum in Kingston, whose collection includes the world's oldest puck (1886) and hockey stick (1888). It also sponsors an annual celebration of the first hockey games played in Kingston. The re-creation of the early games of shinny, based on those of the Kingston garrison soldiers, is performed by current soldiers from Canadian Forces Base Petawawa. <www.kingston.org/ihm>

Windsor also is home to a museum of hockey, the Hockey Heritage Centre, supported by the Windsor Hockey Heritage Society. According to the society's newsletter, the number one objective of the society is "to promote Windsor, Nova Scotia as the Birthplace of Hockey." Both the society's newsletter and its Web site <<http://cnet.windsor.ns.ca/Pages/Hockey/Home.html>> make the claim that "We've been playing hockey in Windsor, Nova Scotia since 1800."

Vaughan, Garth Dr., Hockey in Nova Scotia: The First 100 Years (Windsor: The Windsor Hockey Heritage Society, n.d) n. pag.

⁴¹ Brian McFarlane, One Hundred Years of Hockey (Toronto: Deneau Publishers, 1989).

organization, and there is no documentation that the game went on to become wildly popular following this event.

The origin debate continues to this day, but the issue basically comes down to how one defines the game of hockey, and whether similar or parallel games that are also played with a hooked stick such as hurley and shinny are truly considered to be the beginnings of the game. Games such as these were very common in Nova Scotia and throughout North America, since they were imported with the Irish, English, French, and Scottish. If one does consider these games to be hockey's origins, hockey would not be a Canadian game. As Earl Zukerman says, "shinny indeed may have been a precursor to the game of hockey, but shinny undoubtedly evolved from other stick and ball games like polo and field hockey, which date to Europe in the dark ages."⁴² Games played with crooked sticks were evident as early as the fifth-century B.C. in Greece, as well as in Rome and Asia (Zukerman 16).

These games were even ancient in Canada when the Europeans arrived. Between 1853 and 1855, an American physician and explorer, Elisha Kent Kane, led an Arctic expedition in search of Sir John Franklin. Kane's explorations took him into what is now called Kane Basin between Baffin Island and Greenland, where he spent two winters. Several years later, the writer Sir John Lubbock wrote, "Kane saw the children in Smith's sound playing hockey

⁴² Earl Zukerman, "McGill University: The Missing Link to the Birthplace of Hockey," Total Hockey: The Official Encyclopedia of the National Hockey League, Ed. Dan Diamond, 2nd ed. (Kingston, NY: Total Sports Publishing, 2000) 16.

on the ice" (qtd. in Owen 4).⁴³ In the language of the time, this most likely means that the Inuit children played an on-ice game with a hooked stick and a ball, similar to what Kane and Lubbock would know as hurley. Likewise, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia were known to play a game called "Oochamukunuk" that was hockey-like and played on ice.

However, as Gruneau and Whitson say, "none of these games had much in common with the sport of hockey as we know it today, beyond the fact that they were recreational, physical contests being played with a stick on ice" (32). Zukerman adds agreement: "if one defines the game of hockey with the advent of standardized written rules, a limit to the number of players, regulated ice dimensions, a basic formal structure with organized clubs, team jerseys, referees and regulation goal areas, then the game truly originated with the input of McGill University students in Montreal during the mid-1870s" (19). What was played in Nova Scotia and Kingston prior was basically a glorified hurley. There were no written rules, no standardized rink-size nor player number, and no organized teams nor leagues. Emanuel M. Orlick, a McGill professor and hockey historian, wrote: "The question is not when the games of field hockey, hoquet, hurley or shinney started, but rather, when and where did hurley or shinney develop into the game of Ice Hockey as we know it today?" (qtd. in Zukerman 17). The answer lies in Montreal.

Hockey came to Montreal with James George Aylwain Creighton. Halifax-born on June 12, 1850, this honors graduate of Dalhousie University

⁴³ See Sir John Lubbock, Prehistoric Times. As Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages (xix, 1869) 498.

moved to Montreal to explore engineering possibilities with the Lachine Canal project. When Creighton was growing up, Halifax was in the midst of a “hurley boom” brought on by the immigration of Irish who arrived in the 1830s to work on the Shebunecadie Canal near Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.⁴ It was such a wildly popular game that on January 22, 1853, the *Acadian Recorder* was encouraged to express the fear “that ‘hurley’ or ‘rickets’ and boisterous players wielding their hockey sticks or ‘hurlies’ on Sundays were creating moral and physical dangers to the good citizens of Halifax” (McKinley 4). Creighton himself had grown up also playing ice hockey, rugby football, field hockey, and was a figure skating judge — activities he took up again when he moved to Montreal (5).

The 25-year-old Creighton is credited with changing the face of Canadian culture, though he may have had no revolutionary intentions. While there is very little known about the events preceding March 3, 1875, it has been assumed on many accounts that Creighton was simply helping the McGill rugby football team practice during the winter off-season. Having grown up in hurly-hungry Halifax with some experience playing rudimentary hockey, he encouraged the team to take to the ice. In this, he encouraged a nation to follow suit. Creighton exhibited the first organized and publicized game of ice hockey on Wednesday, March 3, 1875 at Victoria Skating Rink in Montreal in front of “a very large audience’ of 40 people” (7). The following preview appeared in *The Gazette*:

⁴ Michael McKinley, Putting a Roof on Winter: Hockey's Rise from Sport to Spectacle (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2000) 4.

A game of hockey will be played at the Victoria Skating Rink this evening between two nines from among the members. Good fun may be expected, as some of the players are reputed to be exceedingly expert at the game. Some fears have been expressed on the part of the intending spectators that accidents were likely to occur through the ball flying about in a too lively manner, to the imminent danger of lookers-on, but we understand that the game will be played with a flat, circular piece of wood, thus preventing all danger of its leaving the surface of ice. (qtd. in Dryden 213)⁴⁵

That is the moment that bonded hockey to Canadian culture. From then on, hockey was Canada's game. As Ken Dryden stated, "Though hockey-like games had been played for centuries, this was the sport's true departure point" (213).

There are many important things about this first game. First, it was a media feat, for sports held almost no place in the media of the time and coverage of sporting events was rare. This shows that Creighton's "revolution" was "not an act of mad spontaneity, but a revolution that they had been rehearsing — with every intention of showing it off" (McKinley 6). The game received coverage in *The Gazette* both the day before and the day after the March 3rd game, in what McKinley calls "the world's first post-game report" (9). Following the game, this is what was said:

The game is like lacrosse in one sense — the block [of wood] having to go through flags placed about eight feet apart in the same manner as

⁴⁵ Ken Dryden, *The Game: A Thoughtful and Provocative Look at a Life in Hockey* (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1983).

the rubber ball — but in the main the old country game of shinty gives the best idea of hockey. . . . The match was an interesting and well-contested affair, the efforts of the players exciting much merriment as they wheeled and dodged each other, and notwithstanding the brilliant play of Captain Torrance's team, Captain Creighton's men carried the day, winning two games [goals] to the single of the Torrance nine. The game was concluded about half-past nine, and the spectators then adjourned well-satisfied with the evening's entertainment. (qtd. in McKinley 9)

Mentioning shinty shows that this is a game that was similar to "old country" pastimes, but that it was something altogether new. It was a novelty that was exciting for those who were witness and for those who subsequently read about it in the newspaper. This began the relationship between Canadian media and hockey that would be mutually dependent for many decades to come.

The second important thing this game accomplished was to create a set of rules. Creighton taught the rules that he had learned as a youngster in Halifax to the McGill students. These eventually became known as "Halifax Rules," and are much different than those used in the game played today, with no lines painted on the ice, no goal nets, no forward passing, and no replacement players, among other differences. Regardless, the rules established the foundation for the game that has evolved into the modern game.

The third important aspect of this first game is the newspaper's statement that the game would be played between "two nines." Prior to this point, hockey and hockey-like games were always played with as many people as were available. It was not uncommon to find a pond game being played with a disc of frozen manure and upwards of fifty players, or even one hundred players. The Victoria Skating Rink's limited ice size led Creighton to limit the number of players to cut down on the awkwardness of too many bodies on the ice.

The fourth important facet of hockey that was born with the first game is also related to the size of the ice. Victoria Skating Rink's place in the history of hockey is notable for a reason additional to being the location of the first publicized showing of an organized game of hockey. Bordering on the three Montreal streets Drummond, De Maisonneuve, and Dorchester (now René Lévesque Boulevard), the rink was an impressive structure. At 10,000-square feet and with a 52-foot-high roof, it was the city's largest indoor rink, and at night the public skated under the light of gas jets and were serenaded by a live band playing skater's waltzes (McKinley 5). However, the rink was limited in its ice surface. Games of hockey that had been played prior to that March were all played on lakes, ponds, and rivers — open spaces of varied size. The ice surface of the Victoria Skating Rink was approximately 200 feet by 85 feet (Zukerman 17) — the same size used for nearly every hockey game in North America, including the NHL, to this day.

It did not take long for hockey to take off in popularity and to take on an even more organized state. Only two years later, in early 1877, the first formally organized ice hockey club was founded by a group of McGill students. They played informal clubs in Montreal. On February 27, 1877 the *Gazette* published the game's first written rules, which were actually virtually unchanged from English field hockey rules (17). Hockey spread like wildfire. By the 1880s the game had moved out of Eastern Ontario and Western Québec, and in only a few years there were intra-city leagues in Montreal, Québec City, Ottawa, Toronto, Peterborough, Halifax, Saint John, Winnipeg, as well as a "phenomenal" expansion throughout the Province of Québec (Metcalf 62).

Within ten years of Creighton's game, hockey had nearly coast-to-coast popularity, and there was talk of creating national hockey tournaments. "The *Gazette* . . . called for the creation of a 'Dominion Hockey Association' to develop hockey as a 'national pastime' and to give it 'a higher standard of excellence, both as a game and in the eyes of the public'" (qtd. in Gruneau and Whitson 38-39)⁴⁶. Several teams in Montreal attempted to do this in 1886, when they joined teams from Ottawa and Québec City to form the Amateur Hockey Association of Canada (AHAC). While this was essentially a regional organization always unable to establish itself nationally, "the AHAC was the first formally constituted organization that set itself up with a view to defining the nature of hockey for a broad constituency, popularizing the new game, and regulating the state of play" (Gruneau and Whitson 39). This was the beginning of hockey's permanent role as a Canadian institution.

⁴⁶ See Donald Guay, L'histoire du hockey au Québec : origine et développement d'un phénomène culturel avant 1917 (Chicoutimi: JCL, 1990) 75.

The state of permanency is emphasized by the popularity of hockey in the educational environment. In Canada's larger cities, schoolboys had the chance by the early 1900s to play hockey in inter-school leagues, and in the schools of smaller towns across the country, exhibition games were exploding in prominence. That hockey was played in school was a sign that hockey was deemed to be an aspect of what it was to grow up Canadian. "It meant that hockey was now recognized as important in the education of Canadian boys."⁴⁷

Many Canadian boys were playing, too, as some observers from overseas noted. Lady Aberdeen, the wife of Canada's Governor General, wrote on January 20, 1894: "There are many men & boys here in Ottawa who practically live for hockey."⁴⁸ However, she also went on to write: "The more I see of hockey, the less I like it — it presents too fierce a temptation for roughness & unfairness for any average person. I am sure I should murder my opponents if I were to play at such close quarters & with a stick in one's hand" (70). Another observer from England, James MacDonald Oxley, commented in 1895 that "there is perhaps no winter sport . . . that is destined to become more popular, or have more enduring favour [in Canada]. . . . The boys are taking hold of the game with great zest, closely imitating the tricks and artifices of their big brothers, and it is safe to say that hockey has definitely taken its place among the national sports of Canada."⁴⁹ These accounts express the enduring

⁴⁷ Alan Metcalfe, Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport 1807-1914 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1987) 65.

⁴⁸ Lady Aberdeen, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 1893-1898, Ed. John T. Saywell (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1960) Early Canadiana Online, Ottawa Public Library, 26 Feb. 2001 <www.canadiana.org> 60-61.

⁴⁹ James MacDonald Oxley, My Strange Rescue and Other Stories of Sport and Adventure in Canada (London: T. Nelson, 1895) Early-Canadiana Online, Ottawa Public Library, 26 Feb. 2001 <www.canadiana.org> 347.

feelings Canadians attached to the game of hockey in such a short time. While most Canadians were well-familiar with similar forms of the game as shinny or hurley, it was the game of organized rink hockey that these observers saw becoming a national dream and a national pastime.

As has been established, much of the acceptance of hockey as a part of Canadian culture has to do with its historic relationship to the people of Canada and to the very fiber of their collective national identity. Over and over again it is emphasized in popular discourse that Canadians have a deeper understanding of the game and of the history of the game than any other culture because they have had it longer and it has become "our game," the Canadian game.

This myth also finds its way often into anti-American discussions. Nearly from the very beginning of hockey's rise as a sport and spectacle in Canada, it was becoming a phenomenon in the United States as well. Without the constraints of Victorian morality and with the push of burgeoning capitalism, the Americans established professional hockey long before it was acceptable practice in Canada. The first two professional leagues were both in the U.S. — the Western Pennsylvania Hockey League (WPHL) operating out of Pittsburgh, and the International Hockey League (IHL) in northern Michigan — and once again there is some disagreement over which was first.

According to Ernie Fitzsimmons, the first professional hockey league was the WPHL which began operating as a fully professional city circuit in

Pittsburgh in 1902-03, but was paying players possibly even before the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ Pittsburgh's luck was that it had artificial ice as early as 1900, while there was none in Canada until 1911 when artificial-ice rinks were constructed in Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia (Metcalf 67). Being able to play a longer season drew Canadian players south, as well as the incentive of being provided a job and a salary of \$15 to \$20 per week (Gruneau and Whitson 74). The WPHL was almost completely made up of paid Canadian players by 1901-02 (Fitzsimmons 32), many of whom had been expelled from amateur leagues in Canada for accusations of professionalism (Gruneau and Whitson 74). An example of a team made up of mostly Canadians was the Bankers, which "included goalie Frank Richardson from Montreal, Dunc Taylor and Cecil Henderson from Port Arthur, and a budding star in Lorne Campbell of Ottawa via Montreal" (Fitzsimmons 32).

Meanwhile, in Houghton, Michigan, a small town in the state's Upper Peninsula, dentist and former hockey player John Liddell Macdonald Gibson was beginning the movement towards the International Hockey League. He organized a Houghton team called the Portage Lakes which was then part of the semi-professional Upper Peninsula League. The Lakes played and beat a number of teams from throughout Michigan, Ontario, and Pennsylvania before playing the Federal Amateur Hockey League champion Montreal Wanderers. Gruneau and Whitson tell us that, "In the wake of the victory they posed for a team picture that carried the title 'World's Champions'" (75).

⁵⁰ Ernie Fitzsimmons, "Early Pro Leagues: The First Days of Play-for-Pay Hockey," Total Hockey: The Official Encyclopedia of the National Hockey League, Ed. Dan Diamond, 2nd ed. (Kingston, NY: Total Sports Publishing, 2000) 32.

Eventually, it was decided to merge teams from Michigan and Pennsylvania into one professional league — the IHL. This league had no qualms about paying its players. Most hockey historians have acclaimed the IHL to be the first professional hockey league because it was “the first openly professional hockey league” (Gruneau and Whitson 75). The league was made up of teams from the northern Michigan towns of Houghton, Calumet, and Sault Ste. Marie, as well as a team from across the locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and one in Pittsburgh. At this time there was a large transfer of Canadian amateur talent to the IHL, creating the first uproar of concern over a hockey brain drain (75).

An example of this ongoing concern is an article in the Canadian magazine *Maclean's*, March 1 1926, a few months before Detroit bought a Canadian team and moved it.⁵¹ The article is titled “Will U.S. Cash Cripple Our Hockey?” Charles H. Good wrote: “Can the backers of professional hockey in Canada hold their own against the money-bags of the rich United States promoters or will Canadian hockey fans be forced year by year to see their stars disappear to shine in another firmament? That is the question which is worrying ‘pro’ hockey fans” (13). It still is. While today’s papers are full of reporters and fans wagging their pens about the recent trend towards moving Canadian teams south, the truth is this has been an issue all along, from the beginning — and before it was teams, it was players. “For,” as Good wrote in 1926, “professional hockey is, first and last, a money-making affair. And, sad to say, our neighbors to the south possess more of that useful commodity. . . So,

⁵¹ Charles H. Good, “Will U.S. Cash Cripple Our Hockey?” *Maclean's* (1 March 1926).

if hockey develops into a battle where the longest purse is bound to win, Canada's chances of retaining any star hockey experts will be very slim indeed" (13).⁵²

Whitson echoes an old cliché: "what's old is new again" when he writes, "the movement of hockey teams (and players) from smaller Canadian centres to larger American ones is not new, nor are Canadian concerns about the loss of our game to the Yankee dollar."⁵³ Ken Dryden found the same thing when he began doing research for *The Game*. He started to realize that the fears filling up space in the sports coverage of today's newspapers, radio shows, and television broadcasts are the exact same as they were a hundred years ago. Dryden wrote: "It was the recurring themes that startled me the most: hockey as big business, the decline in interest in the United States, the NHL's pandering to the American fan, the increase in fighting and brawling — all were themes we had been led to believe had begun with our generation" (212). In fact, these themes are as old as the sport itself.

These themes are often reflected in the popular discourse of today as an

⁵² As a means of comparison, see a contemporary article on the same subject, such as the January 31, 2000 Canadian Edition of *Time*, which features the cover story, "Hockey takes a beating: With no subsidy deal, and Europeans taking over as stars, what's left of Canada's game?" (Stein). While government subsidies and European players were unheard of in 1926, the sentiment of the article is identical: the fear of losing "Canada's game" to outside forces, and by extension, the fear of losing a distinctive Canadian identity.

⁵³ David Whitson, "Hockey and Canadian Identities: From Frozen Rivers to Revenue Streams," A Passion for Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies, Eds. David Taras and Beverly Rasporich, 3rd ed. (Toronto: ITP Nelson, 1997) 302.

anti-expansionist and anti-Americanization sentiment.⁵⁴ The idea behind this is that there is no history behind expansion teams, and that the fans in new hockey towns do not have any knowledge of the over one hundred years of hockey that have come before. Klein and Reif say, "If you watch hockey on American TV, you'd never know the NHL existed before Gretzky started playing, you might not even get a sense that the game itself existed before the Mighty Ducks took to the ice" (92).

Another example is provided by Jeff Z. Klein and Karl-Eric Reif, who write: "[W]hat's really unconscionable by every aesthetic and moral standard is tearing the game out by its northern roots and transplanting it into the American Sun Belt, where people wouldn't know King Clancy from Queen Latifah."⁵⁵ The point is that in the American Sun Belt there is no sense of history for the game, so no one would know that Francis Michael "King" Clancy (1903-1986), who played for the Ottawa Senators and Toronto Maple Leafs in the 1920s and 1930s, is a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame and not the popular female rap

⁵⁴ Expansion of the NHL started in 1967 when the league went from six to twelve teams. In 2001, there are 30 teams. "Americanization," is used to refer to the dominance of American culture in Canada and around the world. Kidd, however, prefers to instead use "American capitalist hegemony" as a term more relevant to the specific way American culture effects the organization of Canadian sport (qtd. in S. Jackson 429). However, for the purposes of this paper, Americanization is a simple and efficient term to use. Most importantly, it is the word most commonly used in the discourse particular to Canadian hockey, and thus to this paper. For more on Americanization and Canadian sport, see Bruce Kidd, "How Do We Find Our Own Voices in the 'New World Order'? A Commentary on Americanization" Sociology of Sport Journal, 8 (1991) 178-184.

Also, Steven L. Jackson, "Gretzky, Crisis, and Canadian Identity in 1988: Rearticulating the Americanization of Culture Debate," Sociology of Sport Journal (11 1994) 428-446.

⁵⁵ Jeff Z. Klein, and Karl-Eric Reif, The Death of Hockey, or How a Bunch of Guys with Too Much Money and Too Little Sense are Killing the Greatest Game on Earth (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1998) 26.

musician and actress Queen Latifah.⁵⁶

Similarly, Dryden and Roy MacGregor, in attempting to answer their own question, "Why do we love this game?" end up comparing American and Canadian attitudes towards hockey within a historical context:

The average American fan sees only the hockey game in front of him — the speed, the collisions — the full power of which never reaches him in his living room. He doesn't hear names with rich, complicated histories. He doesn't see ghosts of players past, games and teams past, a whole lifetime of them, cavorting across his TV screen with every second of the present. He has no childhood stories, no childhood heroes to remember. . . . Hockey is Canada's game. Nothing else is; nothing else will be.⁵⁷

This shows the importance some Canadian hockeyists put on the history of the game. Dryden and MacGregor are essentially suggesting that although an average American hockey fan may know the rules of the game, may be a fan of the game, and may even love the game, he/she will never understand or see the game the way a Canadian would because he/she has not grown up with a knowledge of the historical context in which to place what he/she views.

⁵⁶ The Sun Belt is the common term for the southern U.S., and includes NHL teams that are located in the South, such as the Phoenix Coyotes, Florida Panthers (Miami), Dallas Stars, and Atlanta Thrashers. It is interesting to note that there is a web site dedicated to teaching the game of hockey to fans in the southern U.S. <<http://locutus.vuse.vanderbilt.edu/hockeyguide>>. Called "The Southerners Guide to Hockey," this site, maintained by John D. Crocetti, includes sections on the history of the game, rules of the game, and terminology.

⁵⁷ Ken Dryden and Roy MacGregor, Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Inc., 1989) 267.

Because hockey history is pervasive within the Canadian cultural discourse, the game of hockey truly has become a Canadian institution. Myths need a history; they do not arise out of thin air. In order for a myth to become naturalized its consumers need to have a foundation, a history, upon which it is based, even if that history is not specifically true. Duffy said that, in myth-making, history is refashioned "to suit the dynamics of the symbolic structure," (17) so in spite of historical fact, Canadian culture has claimed hockey's history as its own. This is why history has such an important role within the context of hockey in Canada, and why it, itself, has become a myth.

2.2

The Myth of Hockey as Canada's Common Coin

The second myth is hockey as the "common coin" of Canada, a term used by Neil Earle.⁵⁸ It is often said that hockey is the one thing that binds all of Canada together coast to coast. Earle wrote, "Hockey as our authentic 'national anthem' may indeed weave one of the few imaginative strands in a huge country with a diverse population" (109). Hockey is often represented as a unification of French- and English-speaking Canada, a game which crosses the language barrier, and thanks to the marvels of television and radio, a game which can be watched all across the country.

⁵⁸ Neil Earle, "Hockey as Canadian Popular Culture: Team Canada 1972, Television and the Canadian Identity," Journal of Canadian Studies, 30:2 (Summer 1995) 109.

Hockey is popular in every province and territory and is played in almost every town, city, and village in the entire country. Previously, it was shown that hockey's expansion throughout Canada was quick. Within thirty years of the first ever hockey game, it was being played with vigor from Victoria to St. John's and it had become an established national cultural institution, national dream, and national pastime. This begs the question of how such a simple activity as a game could spread so quickly and be accepted so passionately by people who otherwise saw few similarities between themselves, their provinces, or their regions. There were language, lifestyle, and ethnic differences, yet all across the country people came to know the game of hockey.

The two biggest influences in the national expansion of hockey were the railway and the media. The railway was instrumental in the spread of hockey fever. As McKinley explains, "More than anything else, the creation of a transcontinental railway popularized hockey, opening up the harsh landscape so that Lord Stanley's dream could be realized under a series of roofed rinks that popped up to mark this westward progress" (31). In 1881, construction began on the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the first means to connect Canada's west with its east. It prompted trade, allowed for settlement of the vast prairies, and as McKinley says, "along with the railway would come ice hockey" (31). Just as Creighton brought the ideas of hockey with him as he moved from Halifax to Montreal, other lovers of the game took it with them as they traveled cross-country. By 1896, Winnipeg, which was on the CPR mainline, had thirty hockey clubs, one of whom challenged and beat the Montreal Victorias for the Stanley Cup and the Championship of Canada

(McKinley 33). In a short time, hockey was no longer dominated by Montreal and Ottawa and was truly becoming national.

Another accomplishment of the CPR was a national telegraph service. Eventually the demand for hockey coverage was so great across the country that it was common in the 1890s for telegraph operators, along with a sports reporter, to sit rinkside or in the press box to send accounts of the game in Morse code. The accounts were then read aloud to gathered crowds or posted on a bulletin board at the receiving end, and were often printed verbatim in the local newspaper. This "allow[ed] the rudiments of hockey broadcasting to connect the imagination of the country with the game on cold winter nights" (McKinley 35). While hockey coverage had originally been without any "color" and was only an account of the bare necessities — usually game time, game score, team roster — telegraphers began to add drama and excitement, a sense of environment, and more emphasis on individual players to create a sense of heroism to their broadcasts. This is significant because the way in which hockey was covered did a lot to promote the game across the country and helped to integrate it into a lasting part of Canadian culture.

An example is provided by McKinley. When the Winnipeg Vics traveled to Montreal to challenge the Montreal Victorias for the Stanley Cup in 1896, hundreds of Winnipeg's fans filled the Manitoba, Queens, and Clarendon hotels to listen to the reports coming in from the CPR telegraph wires (35). Winnipeg's *Free Press* explained: "Superintendent Jenkins and Mr. Thos. Masters of the C.P. Telegraphs manipulated the keyboard while Manager Tait,

in clarion tones, but with a distinct Scotch accent, sang out the bulletins" (qtd. in McKinley 35-36).

The newspaper forum has also been an invaluable tool for expanding the scope of hockey. Newspapers were the first medium to help promote hockey in Canada, as the examples from *The Gazette* regarding the first hockey game have shown. In the late nineteenth century, the Dominion was at a crossroads about how best to balance the values of a "Victorian commonwealth" and the advancing turn-of-the-century populist idea of "the common man" (Gruneau and Whitson 81). This populism led to a nearly "threefold increase in the number of newspapers published between 1874 and 1900, in large part due to the emergence of self-declared 'people's journals' — *La Presse* (1884) in Montreal; *The Telegram* (1874), *The News* (1881), and *The Star* (1892) in Toronto; and the *Herald* (1889) in Hamilton" (Gruneau and Whitson 81). These papers had greatly expanded sports coverage, which was considered increasingly important to their readership. As Whitson points out, "Interest in hockey . . . spread across the country, and a populist nationalism was given daily voice in the Canadian media's patriotic support for the [Toronto Maple] Leafs and the [Montreal] Canadiens" ("Identities" 302).

It is radio, however, that is credited with really bringing the drama of hockey into homes across Canada in the 1920s. Richard P. Cavanaugh claims that the success of hockey on the radio came out of the popularity of the sports press.⁵⁹ At this time, several NHL teams moved to the U.S. and several

⁵⁹ Richard P. Cavanaugh, "The Development of Canadian Sports Broadcasting 1920-78," *Canadian Journal of Communications*, 17:3 (1992) 302.

other new teams opened in the States, including the Boston Bruins, Chicago Blackhawks, Detroit Cougars (later Red Wings), New York Rangers, New York Americans, and Pittsburgh Pirates (previously Québec Bulldogs and Hamilton Tigers).⁶⁰ Despite the moves southward, the great number of hockey fans in Canada was not affected at all. The players were still almost all Canadian, the league's headquarters were in Montreal, and the Montreal and Toronto teams were dominant, so there was little cause for concern among Canadian fans.

Hockey's cultural prominence in Canada was further encouraged by the popularity of radio broadcasts. In 1923, the first broadcasts of local amateur games on Toronto's CFCA were announced by Foster Hewitt, who went on to become "the unofficial voice of hockey in Toronto" for several decades (Gruneau and Whitson 100). In 1931, Hewitt went into a partnership with Maple Leafs' owner Conn Smythe to announce local, regular, Saturday evening broadcasts sponsored by General Motors, which had a five-year contract with the NHL. The first "Hockey Night in Canada" show covered the opening game at Toronto's new Maple Leaf Gardens. Two years later, the Saturday evening NHL broadcasts were expanded to thirty-three stations from coast to coast (Cavanaugh 303). The first coast-to-coast radio broadcast of "Hockey Night in Canada" was a game between the Detroit Red Wings and Toronto Maple Leafs.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Bruce Kidd, The Struggle for Canadian Sport (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1996) 200-201.

⁶¹ "Hockey Night in Canada: A History of Excellence," Canadian Broadcast Corporation 1999, 15 Jan. 2001 <www.cbc.ca>

The following summer of 1933, a deal was made to also cover Montreal Canadiens' games in French and Montreal Maroons games in English. "Hockey Night in Canada" was, therefore, the first radio program of any kind to reach a national audience in Canada in both English and French. "By 1934, games from either Toronto or Montreal were reaching more than one million listeners in every part of the country" (Whitson "Identities" 303). That year, an estimated 72 percent of all the radios in Canada were tuned into Hewitt's broadcasts of the Stanley Cup semi-finals (Kidd 223). The audience had doubled to nearly two million listeners by the end of the 1930s (Gruneau and Whitson 101). Radio and "Hockey Night in Canada" had not only popularized the game of hockey in Canada, but managed for the first time to bring together diverse populations across the country for the same common experience.

In 1875, Creighton exhibited the first official game of hockey in front of forty curious onlookers. In 1881 Prime Minister John A. Macdonald demanded that a national railway be constructed. Only fifty years later, over two million Canadians from across the country were listening to games on the radio. Only thirty years after that there were 5.5 million French- and English-speaking Canadians tuning in to *Hockey Night in Canada* every Saturday night. Now, in 2001, "there [are] 4.5 million Canadians participating in the game, either in men's, in women's, kid's, amputee, sludge, [and] all the various forms of hockey."⁶² Because of the railway that connected towns from coast-to-coast and because of media technology that developed around it, hockey is said to be a national phenomenon — and perhaps one of the few phenomena — that

⁶² "Hockey Day in Canada Primetime Special," Narr. Ron MacLean, CBC, CBOT, Ottawa, 23 Feb. 2001.

expands beyond regional, cultural, language, and physical barriers to effect the lives of all Canadians.

This is a common myth which can be found prevalent in much hockey discourse. An example of this is a column in *The Sporting News*, called "You're Leaving Canada Dry: A Hockey Fan's Lament," by Steve Simmonds.⁶³ Discussing how Canada is such a regionalized, decentralized country in which people from coast-to-coast and province-to-province have little in common, he wrote: "There is no harmony, the only common thread that links these regions in any way is a game we all know, play, watch and talk about. A game we still like to think is ours" (Simmonds). He is buying into the myth that people of all regions, beliefs, and languages who call Canada home have hockey in common and that it — the game — is the one thing that everybody understands.

Dryden and MacGregor contribute to the myth, as well, in *Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada*. The first chapter in the book is titled "The Common Passion," which implies that the passion of hockey is something which Canadians all have in common. They say: "And though its symmetry is far from perfect, hockey does far better than most in cutting across social division — young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural, French and English, East and West, able and disabled. It is this breadth, its reach into the past, that makes hockey such a vivid instrument through which to view Canadian life"

⁶³ Steve Simmonds, "You're Leaving Canada Dry: A Hockey Fan's Lament," *The Sporting News* 219:42 (16 Oct. 1995) Infotrac General Reference Center Gold, Capital Area District Library, Williamston, Michigan, 8 Nov. 1999, 8.

(Dryden and MacGregor 9).

This phenomenon of hockey bringing people together can happen on a smaller scale within communities, as well. In their book, *The Rink: Stories from Hockey's Home Towns*, Chris Cuthbert and Scott Russell equate much of the power of the rink as a social focus of community and nationality in Canada with its ability to bring communities together in spite of their differences.⁶⁴ They are following the myth of the common coin as it relates to the local level, and by extension, because this is something that happens consistently across the nation, the rink brings together people on a national level as well. One woman from Kingston, Ontario, who grew up watching her brothers play in the local rink every Saturday, is quoted as saying, "Unlike the church I went to, the rink in Kingston was non-denominational. It excluded no one and was a place where everyone was welcome" (qtd. in Cuthbert and Russell xiii). Cuthbert and Russell go on to say, "Here [in Canada], hockey is universal and the common building in most communities, whether urban or rural, is the local rink" (xiii).

In a Canada which is increasingly diverse, hockey is sometimes seen as part of an immigrant's "Canadianization" process. An example of this can be found in Earle. He mentions Trevor Brown, a Jamaican immigrant and professor at York University whose son plays hockey on a team in northern Toronto. The team includes immigrants from Trinidad and Vietnam as well as Jewish and Arab-Canadians. Earle quotes Brown: "[Hockey] is a ceremony, a ritual, an almost mystical rite. . . . The playing of the game credentials a boy

⁶⁴ Chris Cuthbert and Scott Russell, *The Rink: Stories from Hockey's Home Towns* (Toronto: Viking, 1997).

and makes him an authentic Canadian" (123). The game of hockey is something that these immigrants — Vietnamese, Trinidadian — as well as marginalized Canadians — Jewish and Arab — can share, because it is something that binds them together and attaches them to the culture of Canada. It is a rite of passage into the landscape of Canadiana.

Stan Mikita is another immigrant to Canada who used hockey as his introduction to Canadian culture. Three days before Christmas in 1948, when Mikita was eight years old, his parents sent the boy from his native Czechoslovakia to be adopted by his aunt and uncle in St. Catharines, Ontario. He spoke no English and knew nothing about hockey. However, he watched the local children playing road hockey, and gradually gathered the courage to join the game. He said that "hockey was the biggest help in making the adjustment to a new life."⁶⁵ From the first introduction to hockey, which was also how he learned to speak English, Mikita went on to become a 22-year veteran of the Chicago Blackhawks organization.

In hockey, people of different backgrounds play on the same teams and work together as teammates. Brenda Zanin realized the common coin mythology of hockey while watching her son's games. All of the children were in matching uniforms, working together, but the names on their backs reflected their ethnic backgrounds and the diversity of Canada. She wrote: "Côté, Zanin, Papadopoulos, McSween, Sarlos Did they care if a teammate was English or French? Greek or Arab? Hardly. They all had a mission to accomplish and

⁶⁵ For the Love of Hockey — Hockey Stars' Personal Stories, Comp. Chris McDonell (Willowdale, Ont.: Firefly Books, 1997) 119.

they were all giving their hearts to it."⁶⁶

Statistics also point to the widespread popularity of hockey in Canada. In a 1999 issue, *Canadian Geographic* published a map of Canada showing the hometowns of all the Canadian NHL players. As the accompanying article indicates, "players skate to the big league from virtually every corner of Canada."⁶⁷ This illustrates how myths may sometimes be based on fact. In the year 2001, National Hockey Leaguers come from every Canadian province and the Northwest Territories. Table One is an updated version of a table that appears in the *Canadian Geographic* article, with data from the 2000-2001 NHL team rosters⁶⁸ and Statistics Canada's 2000 provincial population records. This table shows the widespread popularity of hockey across the country.

Table One

NHL players per province/territory		
Players/million pop.	Total Population	Number of Players
36.7	Saskatchewan (1,023,636)	37
23.8	Northwest Territories (42,083)	1
19.7	Alberta (2,997,236)	59
13.0	Ontario (11,669,344)	152
12.2	Manitoba (1,147,880)	14
10.9	Québec (7,372,448)	80
9.6	British Columbia (4,063,760)	39
7.4	Newfoundland (538,823)	4
7.2	Prince Edward Island (138,928)	1
4.3	Nova Scotia (940,996)	4
2.6	New Brunswick (756,598)	2
0	Nunavut (27,692)	0
0	Yukon Territory (30,663)	0

⁶⁶ Brenda Zanin, "Common Goals: Côte. McSween. Papadopoulos. The Names on the Sweaters Spell Canada," *Canadian Living*, 23:2 (Feb. 1998) 127.

⁶⁷ "Hockey Hero Hometowns," *Canadian Geographic*, March/April 1999, 29.

⁶⁸ Rosters as of January 23, 2001

In the 2001 NHL Entry Draft, the first player from Nunavut was selected. Jordin Tootoo, 18, from Rankin Inlet was drafted first in the fourth round, 98th overall, by the Nashville Predators. Tootoo only played four years of organized hockey before being drafted because there were not enough boys in his hometown to form more than one team.⁶⁹ The selection of Tootoo in the draft is just another example of the common coin quality of hockey, and it was noted even by CBC's Ron MacLean during his coverage of the 2001 Canada Day festivities on Parliament Hill. Tootoo, who comes from a culture very different from most Canadians — he scarred his hand with a harpoon while seal fishing (Stevens) — has hockey in common with the rest of Canada. Even on Hudson Bay, he was unable to escape the great Canadian hockey myth.

One of the prime examples of hockey being a unifying cultural force for Canadians was the campaign by a small town in Saskatchewan to build a hockey rink. In 1986, Radisson, Saskatchewan was a town of approximately 434 people, whose biggest claim to fame was as the hometown of NHLer Bill Hajt. Like in many small prairie towns, the rink was the center of life. In the late 1980s there were 459 indoor rinks in Saskatchewan, and by comparison, the entire Soviet Union — which is about 300 times larger — only had 116 (Dryden and MacGregor 23). Towns like Maymont, population 197, had a rink, as well as Marquis, population 97, and Brownlee, population 89 (23). The people of Radisson found that their town was threatened by the loss of the hockey rink. The 1960 rink was old and uninsurable, and the community knew it had to somehow find the money to replace it or face the possibility of

⁶⁹ Neil Stevens, "Jordan Tootoo First Player from Nunavut to be Selected in NHL Entry Draft," Canada Post 24 June 2001, 11 July 2001 <www.canada.com>

becoming a ghost town.

A rink on the prairies was more than just another building; it was the lifeblood of the community. As Walter Kyliuk of Radisson said, "We know of other towns that have lost their rinks. They die overnight" (15). Towns without rinks found that they could not attract quality doctors, teachers, and policemen to their communities because there were no recreational activities to occupy their leisure time on the stark prairie. Fielding, Saskatchewan, a community neighboring Radisson, lost its rink, and soon after watched the exodus of its grocery stores, the school, the post office, and all but three families (15).

Radisson refused to face the same fate, and chose to rally together to raise the \$500,000 necessary to build a new hockey rink. The campaign started slowly with bottle drives and box socials, but very little money was raised. The next big step was to organize a dinner in honor of the retirement of Haijt from the NHL, with him as the guest of honor, and special guests *Hockey Night in Canada* personality Don Cherry and Hartford Whalers General Manager Emile Francis. In 434-person Radisson, 400 people attended the dinner, and 800 the dance that followed. \$8,000 was raised, and Haijt's former team, the Buffalo Sabres, offered another \$5,000. This started the ball rolling.

Next, traveling to Toronto, several members of the campaign were interviewed by the *Toronto Star* and encouraged Torontonians to contribute to the cause. Radisson's Wayne Rookes told the *Star*. "We figured if everyone in Toronto gave \$1 off their paycheque, we'd have it made" (41). While in Toronto,

they experienced the overwhelming power of the rink myth. In a Golden Griddle restaurant, the manager recognized the Radisson men from the picture in the *Star* and gave them meals for free, also arranging for free meals in every other Golden Griddle restaurant in Toronto and free rooms in the Radisson hotel. Rookes said, "It was unbelievable. These people knew nothing of us. They never had to worry about losing their rink. Yet somehow they *understood*" (41).

This experience also introduced Radisson to the myth of hockey as a common coin. The strong regional character of Canada often makes people from different parts of the country to almost feel as though they are from different countries all together. Rookes said, "It's hard for us to know what people in the East are like. It's hard for them to know us, too, I guess. . . . You know, we don't understand each other very well, do we? Yet *this* [the rink] they really understood. You know, I've never felt so Canadian as I did that day" (41).

After Toronto, the Radisson rink campaign continued to bring people from across Canada together. Joe Tutt from Milton, Ontario heard of the campaign and decided to do something about it, so he went on a fund-raising bicycle journey more than 3,000 kilometers from Milton to Radisson. On the way there, he raised \$25,000 and another \$10,000 on the return trip. Also, letters with checks arrived in Radisson every day from across the country. These included Hilda Sibthorpe of Wyebridge, Ontario, who wrote: "I just finished reading the *Star* this morning, and wanted you and your community to know that we from Ontario are not heartless. . . . I live on a pension, so even though the enclosed cheque is not large, it goes with good wishes for success

in raising the necessary funds" (42). Another pensioner who sent \$100 said, "Growing up in a family of eight on a mortgaged farm and our mother a widow, we darn well knew the importance of a rink in a small community" (42).

One small town on the prairie was able to bring people of diverse backgrounds from across Canada's regions together because hockey is something that they all have in common. The rink is a symbol of Canadian community and Canadian identity. There is a reason that Rookes said he had never felt as Canadian until he realized the connective power of the rink myth. Dryden, likewise, said:

Hockey helps us express what we feel about Canada, and ourselves. It is a giant point of contact, in a place, in a time, where we need every one we have — East and West, French and English, young and old, past and present. The winter, the land, the sound of children's voices, a frozen river, a game — all are part of our collective imaginations. Hockey makes Canada feel more Canadian. (19)

In a nation that is often considered to lack a coherent sense of nationalism, in which regions are constantly threatening succession, in which many citizens do not feel common bonds with other citizens, and in which differences are celebrated more often than similarities, it is rare to find something which can bring together incongruous communities. Hockey is said to be the one "common coin" that Canadians have in common regardless of what language they speak or where they live. It makes immigrants into Canadians. It is a language that everyone can speak. This myth was born with

the Canadian Pacific Railway, which was able to spread the game across prairies and mountains. It was strengthened by the telegraph, the radio, and now the television. This myth, regardless of its truth or fiction, is one that allows people to think they are of one nation.

2.3

The Myth of the Canadian Landscape

The third myth is hockey as an extension of the Canadian landscape. This is the belief that Canada is cold, and Canada has ice; therefore hockey makes sense in Canada. Ice age-like images of winters and cold are typical of this myth, as are the ideas that the game of hockey has grown out of this ice and has been built on its foundation. When Michael Novak searched to answer, "What is the basic underlying myth dramatized in hockey?" he decided it lies in its relationship to the north. He said, "The game is played on ice. Its symbolic matrix lies in the lands of snows, blizzards, and dark freezing nights. . . . Against the possibility of freezing, against the omnipresent threat to human survival, hockey celebrates the heat and passion of survival."⁷⁰ It is more than just that the game itself is played on ice, but that the essence of the game is that of cold and ice and the north — the "True North Strong and Free," perhaps — and that it is indelibly linked to ideas of Canadian environmental nationalism.

⁷⁰ Michael Novak, The Joy of Sports: End Zones, Bases, Baskets, Balls and the Consecration of the American Spirit (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1976) 94-95.

Ideas of space, of place, and of the land that physically and spiritually fills space and place are intimately tied to one's sense of self, and when the ideas are the collective imaginings of a community, they are defining elements in that community's collective identity. It has been said that Canadians have a special bond with the land, and that the land, especially the wilderness, is monumental in shaping Canadian identity and in making Canadians uniquely Canadian. It is the land which makes Canadians different from anyone else, and the land which unifies Canadians across cultural differences. It has even been said that the land is the soul of Canada.⁷¹

In his "Conclusion to *A Literary History of Canada*" reprinted in *The Bush Garden*, Canadian theorist Northrop Frye states that the essential question to ask in Canada is not "Who am I?" as much as it is, "Where is here?"⁷² This exemplifies the importance of space and place to the Canadian identity. Likewise, this statement illustrates how interrelated and interdependent space and identity are because it declares that who one is as a Canadian hinges on how one defines this space.

In Canada, identity is based on where here is, as Frye stated, so the question then becomes, how is here defined in the Canadian collective imagination? Very often, the answer is: here is defined according to the belief that Canadians have a mystic connection to the land and especially to the

⁷¹ Raymond Reid, The Canadian Style: Today and Yesterday in Love, Work, Play and Politics (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside Ltd., 1973) 111.

See also Arthur R.M Lower, Colony to Nation (Toronto: Longmans, Green & Co. 1946).

⁷² Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971) 220.

wilderness North. Therefore, "here" is the "True North Strong and Free." This statement is glorified in the Canadian national anthem as the words and the images chosen to represent the nation to the rest of the world.

The viewpoint that Canadians are linked to the land in a spiritual manner that is character-, nation-, and identity-building can be referred to as the "Hutchison Thesis" after the work of Bruce Hutchison, because "it is in [his] eloquence that the theory is most effectively presented" (Reid 110). Hutchison was a prolific Canadian journalist, writer, and staunch environmentalist, who "also had a hand in shaping the national myth."⁷³ The "Hutchison Theory" involves one of the most important elements of the Canadian space-myth, which is "the conviction that in the land alone is to be found the true meaning of the Canadian identity" (Reid 110). In his 1957 book, *Canada: Tomorrow's Giant*, Hutchison's theory is introduced:

If any stranger would know the Canadian mind, let him look first at the land of Canada.

The land, more than anything else, has shaped the mind. We are too young to be fully shaped by history, too remote from one another to be shaped by any abstract theory. But we hold the land jointly, its beauty, illimitable distance, and healing silence. The land lives for all of us in that hidden, wordless region where nations are darkly fashioned and a people is born.⁷⁴

⁷³ Vaughn Palmer, ed., To Canada with Love and Some Misgivings: The Best of Bruce Hutchison (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991) 11.

⁷⁴ Bruce Hutchison, Canada Tomorrow's Giant (Toronto: Longmans, Green & Company, 1957) 59.

Hutchison was saying that the nation of Canada is built on the land, but not in the literal sense that goes without saying, but in a mythological sense such that the sense of nationhood which creates a nation out of a state is built on the foundation of the land-myth. In other words, the imagined community that is the nation of Canada is held together through a common sense of spiritual relationship to the land. For a nation that is barely over one hundred years old, and whose history is not enough to hold it together, and for a nation whose population is as small and spread-out as Canada's, Hutchison argues, the land-myth becomes the only common denominator, and the only true source of identification and community-building.

In this way, the myth contributes to a sense of Canadian nationalism. Pierre Berton said, "Nationalism has many roots, but one of them certainly is the common sharing of a unique environment."⁷⁵ The land is a factor which works to separate and distinguish Canadians and Canada from any other people and/or nation. Rob Shields calls it "an example of a great national foundation myth" because it is such an important platform on which Canadian identity and sense of place is built.⁷⁶ The land and the north and the space-myth which they occupy are integral to the sense of Canadian national consciousness.

This myth comes from an historically Canadian perspective on environmental relativism, which equates character with environment. It is an

⁷⁵ Pierre Berton, Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization of our National Image (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975) 42.

⁷⁶ Rob Shields, Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity (London: Routledge, 1991) 194.

extension of the idea that Canadians are who they are because of their relationship to the land, and that Canadians are superior because of their northern heartiness. It goes along with the arguments of the Canada First Movement of the nineteenth century, which worked towards distinguishing Canada from the U.S. and Britain by promoting a Canadian racialized superiority linked to the climate. The purpose of Canada First was to establish a sense of Canadian nationalism at a time when the nation was very young.

Robert Grant Haliburton planted the seeds for this idea in a lecture to the Montreal Literary Club in 1869, when he said: "We are the Northmen of the New World" (qtd. in Berger 5-6).⁷⁷ Haliburton expressed a social Darwinism which created a myth that is still alive in the Canadian pantheon. Carl Berger said this was a "recurrent theme in Canadian nationalist thought which flowered in the half century after Confederation and which is, in muted form, still with us — the idea that Canada's unique character derived from her northern location, her severe winters and her heritage of 'northern races'" (4).

The belief goes: because of Canada's northern climate, it produces a stronger people than the south, an actual superior "race" of people. The south with which the Canada First Movement was primarily concerned was the U.S. Berger says that, "Just as 'northern' was synonymous with strength and self-reliance, so 'southern' was equated with denigration, decay and effeminacy" (5)

⁷⁷ Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," Nationalism in Canada, Ed. Peter Russett (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975).

Declaring that land makes a people automatically creates an "other." Shields wrote, "To the extent that the 'True North Strong and Free' is a region of the 'Other,' it is the 'pole' in the Southern Canadian popular imagination to which everything that presents a contrast with 'civilization' and its values can be assimilated" (194). The whole myth is built on polarity: Canadian versus not-Canadian, civilization versus wilderness, southern versus northern.

A chapter in Dryden and MacGregor's book begins with this passage: "Somewhere in our souls is a spiritual Canada. Most probably, its bedrock is of snow and ice, winter and the land. And if we were to penetrate it a little deeper, chances are we would find a game" (13). Likewise, Ted Hofman wrote:

Significantly, hockey is a winter game, and winter is a quintessentially Canadian season: cold and harsh, long and dark, winter pulls people together in search of elusive warmth. All Canadians understand the winter experience. Even as we complain about the cold and the deep snow, we are aware of a place inside ourselves where we would feel an acute void without it. We share a national memory of winter, a knowledge that the chill winds blowing through Montreal are whipping across Winnipeg and that the snow over Northern Ontario has also buried the interior of British Columbia.

. . . . Canadians need hockey to give texture to the white blanket of winter, to make the cold less bitter by including it as an element of our game.⁷⁸

Hofman and Dryden and MacGregor are expressing a common sentiment.

⁷⁸ Tod Hofman, "Games of Our Lives," Taking Sport Seriously: Social Issues in Canadian Sport, Ed. Peter Donnelly (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc., 1997) 33.

Winter links Canada together as part of the national collective experience of being Canadian, and hockey is a part of that involvement. It is as though Hockey is Canadian because Canada is Winter.

The hockey rink, as well, has been looked at as an extension of the mythology of the game itself, and has been written into the mythology of hockey and the Canadian landscape. Scott Russell wrote, "Hockey rinks, in various parts of Canada, can be cold and forbidding places. . . . These are extreme environments in which the people huddle to watch a favourite game unfold on a frozen and unforgiving surface" (Cuthbert and Russell xvi). Like the landscape of the Canadian metaphoric North, the hockey rink is a quasi-biodome of the Canadian landscape requiring a hardiness and an acceptance of nature in order to be endured. The hockey rink is an environment representative of that in which it has been founded and of the people from whom it was created — a Canada which is "not a country for the cold of heart or for the cold of feet" as Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau said (qtd. in Reid 115).⁷⁹

This metaphoric hockey rink also brings the northern space myth into those areas of the country which are not of the same physical environmental reality, such as the Maritime provinces Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, where citizens define themselves according to the sea instead of according to the North. Frye wrote: "In the Canadas, even in the Maritimes, the frontier was all around one, a part and a condition of one's whole imaginative being" (220). Even in this sea-faring culture, hockey is a large

⁷⁹ Excerpts from Prime Minister Trudeau's speech delivered at the National Newspaper Awards Dinner in Toronto. See The Globe and Mail, Toronto, April 10, 1972.

influence, and it is the rink which brings to it the sense of hockey as an extension of a Canadian landscape that is cold, ice-covered, and only for those with strength of character and of body. A rink in Nova Scotia is not unlike one in Manitoba or Québec for these reasons. The nature of an ice rink, especially smaller, local ones, requires associations with the North and all that it represents. Describing the rink in Summerside, Prince Edward Island where he grew up playing hockey, Columbus Blue Jackets President and General Manager Doug MacLean said, "I always think now when I leave a rink that it should be cold. . . . The stadium was so cold . . ." (Cuthbert and Russell 46).

Frye says that the Canadian imagination is characterized by a "garrison mentality. . . . [attributed to] small and isolated communities [being] surrounded with a physical or psychological 'frontier,' separated from one another . . . [and] confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting" (225). A hockey rink can create a similar emotional response. While a garrison was an isolated community that leaned in upon itself to avoid the "menacing" frontier, the crowd during a hockey game is a community which is also surrounded by a psychological frontier — the outside world. In their garrison mentality, the crowd can become not a collection of individuals, but a collective pulling for a common goal in opposition to the frontier that encroaches on them from outside.

The metaphor of the Canadian landscape in all its harsh and rugged glory is extended into the ideal of the Canadian hockey player as well. Ward Cornell, a broadcaster from the 1960s said, "'We're rough, rugged guys from

the north' . . . expressing here the reason why hockey had won its way into our hearts" (qtd. in Rutherford 248).⁸⁰ This is the hero epitomized by a guy like Gordie Howe, raised on the prairie of Saskatchewan, the kind of guy who was not afraid to drop the gloves, a man almost as famous for his fighting as he was for his amazing ability to score goals. The image of the hockey player with scars, missing teeth, and a broken nose is often what people view as the ideal of Canadian hockey. It is an image that epitomizes the mythical battle for survival.

The hockey player is forever linked in mythology to the Canadian landscape. As Bruce Kidd and John MacFarlane said in *The Death of Hockey*, "Hockey is the Canadian metaphor, the rink a symbol of this country's vast stretches of water and wilderness, its extremes of climate, the player a symbol of our national struggle to civilize such a land."⁸¹ Paul Rutherford said hockey is "the Canadian game because we had created it. It suited a land in which the winter always loomed so large. Even more the game fitted an image of Canadian manhood" (248).

A form of the Canada First's north/south dichotomy still persists. Today the myth of hockey as an extension of the Canadian landscape manifests itself most often in an expression of distaste for the NHL's southern expansion into the American Sun Belt — "hockey's mythical promised land" (Klein and Reif 25). This involves promoting the belief that populations from the south cannot

⁸⁰ Paul Rutherford, When Television was Young: Primetime Canada 1952-1967 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

⁸¹ Bruce Kidd and John Macfarlane, The Death of Hockey (Toronto: New Press, 1972) 4.

possibly possess an adequate knowledge of the game of hockey, and therefore cannot either play the game or appreciate it fully as fans. Many Canadian columnists have ridiculed the need in southern areas such as Tampa Bay, Florida and Atlanta, Georgia to spell out hockey rules and explain plays to fans who may be attending their first hockey game. Some writers go so far as to suggest the game itself has suffered for the increase of American and European influence. For a cover story in *Time*, Joel Stein questioned, "When did hockey stop being rugged? When did the manly winter sport of the True North transmogrify into some kind of wussy European ice-capade show of the American South?"⁸²

The myth of hockey as an extension of the Canadian landscape is itself an extension of the myth of the "True North Strong and Free," which ties Canadians to the land and to the North in a way that asserts their identity and sense of nationalism. It is a means by which to separate a prevailing sense of "us" from the outside world, and especially from those to the south. It places Canadian hockey on a level that asserts, through imagery and discourse, that the game is unique to Canada because it has grown out of a uniquely Canadian landscape. Just like cold temperatures, winter conditions, and the

⁸² Joel Stein, "Checked Out," *Time* Canadian ed. (31 Jan. 2000) 40.

Another example of the lack of hockey experience in parts of the United States is put forth by Klein and Reif. They write of Denver, Colorado, now the home of the former Québec Nordiques, where local television reporters asked players questions like, "What do you call those sticks you hit the, y'know, 'puck' with?" (27).

In yet another anecdote, a knowledgeable hockey fan who attended an NHL game in Tampa, Florida threw his hat on the ice after a player scored three goals, which is a traditional practice. However, security guards unfamiliar with the tradition of the "hat trick" threw the fan out of the arena for game interference. Sean Hayes, Blue Jay Fever and Some Other Sporting Formations of Canadian Nationalism: An Investigation into the Link Between Symbolic and Anthropologic Culture in the Creation of a 'Rest-of-Canada' Imagined Community, Thesis (School of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1994) 14.

North are suggested to be part of the Canadian psyche, hockey is intimately tied to those same ideas.

2.4

The Myth of Hockey as Pastoral Tradition

The fourth myth is hockey as pastoral tradition. Images of hockey in Canadian culture often take one back to a simpler life, to a time when the game was not about marketing, luxury suites, and television contracts. While the myth of the landscape is based on a current, continuing Canadian battle with nature, the myth of the pastoral is based solely on reminiscing. It is childhood, it is innocence, and it is the country. Often, this myth is found in sentimental writings about the "glory days of hockey," about a nostalgia for a past that can never be again. Perhaps the impact of this myth is most prominent in imagery, rather than print. This is what Ian McKay calls the "picturesque sublime."⁸³ Paintings and photographs depicting children playing an unorganized game of hockey on a rural pond, for example, are the lifeblood of the myth of hockey as pastoral tradition. However, much like the other myths being discussed, the pastoral tradition is not analogous to hockey alone. It is a pervasive discourse throughout Canadian, and all of North American, society, which is then localized, condensed, and naturalized to fit a discourse of Canadian hockey alone.

⁸³ Ian MacKay, "Helen Creighton and the Politics of Antimodernism," Myth and Milieu: Atlantic Literature and Culture 1918-1939, ed. Gwendolyn Davies (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1993) 1.

Canadian sentimentalizing and longing for the country and all that it stands for is something which Peter Harcourt derides in "The Canadian Nation: An Unfinished Text." He argues that "one of the most extraordinary features of writing about Canada is its recurring nostalgia for a rural past that has never actually existed."⁸⁴ In the myth of hockey as an extension of the Canadian landscape, it was argued that Canada is a nation that looks most often to its nordicity. Harcourt agrees by saying a pastoral tradition "seems incongruously inappropriate both for the severity of our climate and for the harshness of our terrain" (9).

However, neither the myth of the north, nor the myth of the pastoral are true in absolute fact. Eighty percent of Canadians live in urban areas, especially in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, and most will never live on a farm or visit the far north.⁸⁵ Neither of these myths has an absolute basis in the reality of the majority of Canadians' everyday lives. That is not what the myths are all about. Myth, by definition, is something that is not necessarily true. Both of these discourses, as has already been shown with the landscape myth, are derived from the ideas, the images, and the stories that flow through mass culture on a continual basis. They are the discourses that make a people who they are, and make them think the way they do.

Michael Oriard argues that the myth of pastoral tradition is basically a relationship of opposition between the country and the city, which is likewise

⁸⁴ Peter Harcourt, "The Canadian Nation — An Unfinished Text," Canadian Journal of Film Studies, 2:2-3 (1993) 9.

⁸⁵ Frank Innes, "Physical and Cultural Geography," Profiles of Canada, 2nd ed., Eds. Kenneth G. Pryke and Walter C. Soderlund (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1998) 52.

analogous to the relationship of youth and age.⁸⁶ In other words, ideas that form the basis of what people imagine as "the country" are often the same as those they imagine for youth, and likewise for the city and aging. The country is where crops are planted and raised. It is an existence where life and the joy of life are central, where energy and health are essential, and where youth is celebrated. Images of youth — joy, energy, innocence, health, purity, beauty, and immortality — are archetypally associated with the country. By contrast, the city of myth is a place of concrete, crime, and consciousness of death. Qualities of age, such as experience, maturity, complexity, seriousness, toughness, and suffering are attributable to the city, as well (Oriard 123).

From this it becomes clear that the myth of the pastoral is essentially an expression of anti-modernism,⁸⁷ for a reaction against the city and all its archetypes, especially modernism, is inherent in the pastoral representation. Modernity and the past often take on the same applied characteristics that have already been defined for the city and the country. Urbanity is modernity. Therefore, images that apply to the city, and then age, are equally impressed on the modern. For example, technology, which creates a sense of impersonality and requires a certain amount of experience and worldliness, is a definite image of modernity, the city, and the aged. Conversely, the imagery

⁸⁶ Michael Oriard, Dreaming of Heroes: American Sports Fiction, 1868-1980 (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982) 123.

⁸⁷ Jackson Lears provides a working definition of antimodernism. He says antimodernism represents "the recoil from an 'overcivilized' modern existence to more intense forms of physical or spiritual experience" (xiii). Antimodernism "sought 'authentic' alternatives to the apparent unreality of modern existence" (5). McKay adds, "In the opposition to the weightlessness, anonymity, uprootedness and secularism of the 20th century, antimodernism venerated the traditional, face-to-face, rooted and faithful community of the past . . ." (1). Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

associated with the past, regardless once again of fact, is that there was a simpler time, when people knew their neighbors and took care of each other's children, and when hockey was not all about the bottom line. The innocence of this discourse is analogous to both the pastoral and youth, and shows the basis of this myth in anti-modernism.

The pastoral is an overridingly positive image, as is youth in North American society. The cultural phenomenon that worships youth has been described by Max Lerner as the "overrated American child," which could easily apply to all of North America. He says:

This conception of the child as a Noble Little Savage possessed of an artless innocence which is corrupted and distorted by civilization, and also the attitude that the child is always the victim, the adult always the guilty fumbler, bungler, meddler, and destroyer, are part of the cult of the American child. (qtd. in Oriard 125)⁸⁸

Lerner applies the same youth/age, country/city symbolism that was used by Oriard. He says that the innocence of youth is corrupted by civilization, which is representative of urbanity. In this myth, the symbols of youth and country — innocence, joy, health, etc. — are damaged by the images of age and city — despair, fear, experience. This creates a phenomenon in which youth and the pastoral are idealized because of their positive associations, and leads to a culturally accepted representative model of all that is good — youth and country, or the "cult of the child" that Lerner described.

⁸⁸ See Max Lerner, America as Civilization (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957) 564-565.

The “cult of the child” is part of western society’s well-known obsession with youth. In advertising, one is constantly bombarded with products aimed at making one look younger than his/her actual age, to smooth wrinkles, to cover gray hair, and to generally hide the “visible signs of aging.” If one cannot manage to *look* younger, then they are often compensated with the cliché, “you are as young as you feel,” or “you are young at heart.” This youth obsession even led the Spanish explorer Don Juan Ponce de Leon on an extensive search for the Fountain of Youth in the early sixteenth century. St. Augustine, Florida now attracts multitudes of visitors to its Fountain of Youth Park, the location of a natural spring which is linked to Ponce de Leon, and mythically linked to the power of age reversal.

The obsession with youth, and its definitive relationship to the pastoral is also an extension of the Garden of Eden archetype. In the Garden, life was free from every type of evil. It was completely idyllic. However, in the myth, evil entered Eden and necessitated an eviction from perfection. In North America, the Industrial Revolution took people from the country to the city and from innocence to worldliness in a similar manner. Even though people in large numbers were transplanted to urban centers, they did not let go of their dreams of the pastoral. It was at this time that the rural took on its image of innocence, hope, and happiness; and the city its characteristic lying, harshness, corruption, and dirtiness. A return to Eden was the ultimate hope and dream of those who had been displaced. Cole Harris says, “it is clear . . . that much of the Canadian past is bound up with life on the farm and in small farm service

centres."⁸⁹

It was at this time, not coincidentally, that sports began to take their place in the North American psyche. The obsession for youth and for the pastoral are both epitomized in sports. Oriard says that sport "compensate[s] for [the] urban . . . loss of contact with its wilderness origins" as a means "for a nation defined initially by its relationship to nature [to] maintain at least some contact with those roots" (76). While sports are generally a product of urbanity, and are generally an urban phenomenon, they are also a reaction against it. They incite the remembrance of a pastoral tradition.

It is obvious that youth and sport go hand-in-hand. Virile young players with a "love of the game" are the prime property of team managers. Not only do they have the physical qualities needed, such as health, quickness, and energy, but they have not had a chance to become jaded by the reality of modern sports, by the long hours on the road away from family, by the extensive dealings with agents and lawyers in contract disputes, and by the repeated beatings of the body during play.

Oriard relates the replacement of veteran sportsmen with rookies to the anthropological case of the killing of the aging king in order to replace him with a young upstart (126).⁹⁰ The examples that Oriard gives which reenact the king's ritual death are:

⁸⁹ Cole Harris, "The Myth of the Land in Canadian Nationalism," Nationalism in Canada, Ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada, Ltd., 1966) 32.

⁹⁰ See Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough (New York: Macmillan, 1963) 308-330.

A veteran who is replaced by a rookie because he has slowed a step and lost his reflexes; a veteran who is traded, although he has a few good years left, because the coach wishes to rebuild his team around younger players; and a veteran in the normal training camp situation who must defend his position every year against rookie hopefuls. (126).

These are things which happen on a very regular basis in hockey and in every other sport. Though this is not the type of image that is generally the myth of hockey as pastoral tradition, it applies to this discourse because it is basically a renewal ritual. Those who have seen too much, known too much, and have been around the block a few too many times are replaced with a rebirth of innocence and joy, the things that the pastoral represents.

Pastoral imagery is intertwined with the discourse of hockey in Canada.

Earle says:

Ice hockey thus represents a multifaceted, rich and duplicitous text, rooted in rural signifiers, the symbolic recall of simpler, more innocent days when life was fresh and bright and bracing and friendship seemed forever. Here are aspects of a northern pastoral that in Canada (at least until fairly recently) was not all myth. Is this hockey's *sanctum sanctorum*, a locus of that elusive tangible, "the true north strong and free"? (113)

The words Earle chose — "simpler," "innocent," "fresh," "bright," "bracing," "friendship" — are the positive characteristics Oriard associated with both youth and the country. This is the opposite of the experienced urbanity. It is not money, marketing, and scheming. It is not the city.

Looking at Table One in section 2.2 again (page 61), it is clear that hockey players in Canada are from primarily pastoral locations. They are most often from small towns, and grow up on farms. More NHL players, per million (36.7), come from Saskatchewan than from any other province. Saskatchewan's Bureau of Statistics qualifies a mere eleven municipalities as cities, which only account for 516,772 people.⁹¹ The rest of the population lives in towns and villages with populations less than 5,000. These include villages like Etter's Beach, population 4. It is in these small towns that a majority of NHL players grow up and learn to play hockey.

The accounts of NHL players reminiscing about growing up in pastoral locations is countless. This small sample proves the power of this myth, its basis in truth, and expresses its important position in the institutionalization of hockey in Canada:

- Theoron Fleury, Russell, Manitoba: "I like to reminisce about the days back home when hockey was just for fun and there was no pressure. It gives me a good feeling and gets me focused on what the game is all about. But I also look back at all the years of practicing, the outdoor ice surfaces, the cold rinks and the long bus rides" (*For the Love* 55).
- Dale Hunter, Petrolia, Ontario: "When my dad took my brothers and me to the rink, he was taking time out from farming. . . . I still farm with my dad in the summers. Going back to the farm — bailing hay, doing the

⁹¹ Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, "Population Statistics," Government of Saskatchewan Online, 11 July 2001 <www.gov.sk.ca>

chores — brings me back to reality . . .” (90).

- **Gordie Howe, Floral, Saskatchewan: “My mom gave a couple of dollars to a woman who was in desperate need of milk for her family. In return, the woman gave my mom a gunnysack full of things, including a pair of skates. . . . From that moment on, I loved skating. I think the two dollars my mom gave that woman was the down payment on my career” (80).**
- **Brent Sutter, Viking, Alberta: “Hockey was the center of life in Viking, Alberta. I was raised on a farm with six brothers [all played in the NHL]; all our spare time was spent playing hockey at the local rink, on the pond at home or, during the summer, in the hayloft of the barn. Like all Canadian kids, our dream was to play in the NHL” (174).**

Instilled in each of these stories is an exodus from the country to the city, and then a reminiscence back to a pastoral childhood. Hockey was a way for each of these men to “escape” the small town to go to the bright lights of the city. However, once in the city, they each mourned the life they left behind. This is the same phenomenon which essentially created the mythic pastoral; the movement of people from the countryside to the urban centers of North America during the Industrial Revolution created a population which then longed for a rural past. While this myth does not necessarily coalesce with the average Canadian's circumstances, it is an example of a myth being based on an historical action that then goes far beyond its factual foundation. As Duffy said, the myth “takes on a life of its own.”

Along with ideas of innocence and hopefulness, the pastoral tradition includes hockey as an appeal to a boy's dreams. This is the image of the boy with his hockey stick on a pond. This is the ultimate romanticism of the game. It is fantasizing that you are Gordie Howe or Wayne Gretzky, and it is looking at professional hockey players today knowing that they once skated at the local rink dreaming the same thing. And they "made it." In the case of adults this myth is epitomized by the "appeal to the 'boy inside the man'" (Earle 111). Earle said this is hockey's "most redeeming cultural feature and lies close to the core of the hockey mystique. This was and is the game's evocation of a peculiarly Canadian paradisiacal myth" (111). It is watching a hockey game as an adult and getting that same feeling of nostalgia and sentiment for youth.

In *The Game*, Ken Dryden discusses his own childhood hockey dreams playing ball hockey in the backyard of his parents' home in the Toronto suburb of Islington. It was the backyard which he said became "the central image" of growing up. "When I think of the backyard, I think of my childhood; and when I think of my childhood, I think of the backyard" (57). Playing ball hockey with the neighborhood kids, the backyard was Maple Leaf Gardens, and "I was Frank Mahovlich, or Gordie Howe, I was anyone I wanted to be, and the voice in my head was that of Leafs broadcaster Foster Hewitt . . ." (56). Later he talks of the power of those backyard ball hockey games in inspiring his imagination and in creating the game as a part of him:

The backyard was not a training ground. In all the time I spent there, I don't remember ever thinking I would be an NHL goalie, or even hoping I could be one. In backyard games, I dreamed I was Sawchuck or Hall,

Mahovlich or Howe; I never dreamed I would be like them. . . . It was here in the backyard that we *learned* hockey. It was here we got close to it, we got *inside* it, and it got inside us. It was here that our inextricable bond with the game was made. (58)

Jim Brosnan would explain Dryden's childhood action as being an example of an "Inner Fan," one who wants to find "absolute identification with the player."⁹² Dryden says that he did not want to be *like* his heroes, he dreamed of actually *being* them, of having absolute identification with them.

Dryden's story is an interesting example of this myth. He depicts a classic expression of a boy's dreams. He says that dreaming of hockey was the defining action of his childhood, and worshiping his heroes was the ultimate expression of his dreams. Additionally, because Dryden is an adult reminiscing about his childhood dreams, it is also an expression of the converse or parallel part of the myth which is an appeal to the boy inside the man. Both parts of this myth can be seen in what Dryden has said, from his childhood perspective as well as looking back as an adult.

The myth of hockey as pastoral tradition is a return to Eden. It is representative of renewal, innocence, happiness, purity, and childhood. It is a reaction against the modern, urban, capitalist hegemony of hockey, which is characterized by impersonality, the bottom line, money, scheming, power, and corruption. In the pastoral dream, hockey is the small town game, the local

⁹² Jim Brosnan, "The Fantasy World of Baseball," Sport Inside Out: Readings in Literature and Philosophy, Eds. David L. Vanderwerken and Spencer K. Wertz (Fort Worth: Texas Christian UP, 1985) 6.

team struggling to survive, the family sitting around the television set on a Saturday night to watch *Hockey Night in Canada* on CBC, and the boy dreaming of being his role model. The myth is pastoral in nature, based on rural signifiers and reminiscing, but it does not matter whether or not Canada is now a rural nation. It is not. What matters is that this myth is essential to the Canadian hockey mythos and that it means a lot to how hockey is represented and discussed in Canada.

2.5

The Myth of the Hero as a Cultural Icon

Moving from the lighthearted dreams of a child, to the sophistication of a culture's icons, the myth of the hero places players of certain rare attributes in mythical positions. "Hero" is a term used lightly in modern semantics, often used interspersed with the idea of "role-model." In Dryden's backyard games, the players he emulated were acting as his role-models, literally the characters after whom he modeled himself and whose roles he took upon himself. The idea of hero has a much tighter focus, however, and is closely related to myth.

Heroes were originally forged on the battlefield, not the athletic field, and were so highly revered for their military prowess that they became the characters of legend and myth, living immortally in the stories of perpetuity. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines hero:

1. Name given to men of superhuman strength, courage, or ability,

favoured by the gods; regarded later as demigods or immortal. 2. One who does brave or noble deeds; an illustrious warrior. 3. A man who exhibits extraordinary braveness, firmness or greatness of soul, in connection with any pursuit, work, or enterprise; a man admired and venerated for his achievements and noble qualities. (171)

Superhuman, demigod, warrior, extraordinary — these words are the salient issues of heroicism, and are what separate it from lesser ideals and lesser characteristics.

These warriors often become national icons as they and their myth become cultural institutions. Heroes are institutionalized and mythologized because they are created as representatives and models of the values society regard most highly, including such things as bravery, intelligence, kindheartedness, strength — whatever is important to the culture at a certain time. Daniel Hoffman explains:

The exploits of a national hero — particularly of a mythical personage — are always clues to the character of the people who celebrate him. He embodies their ideals of personal conduct, their ethical code, their goals; although superhuman, he is created in the image of human aspirations, and his preternatural strength helps men to ward off human fears.⁹³

National heroes are the personification of a societal value system, and are more created than born. The construction of a hero is a phenomenon Bill Butler describes as “more comprised of intuition than intellect [where] the

⁹³ Daniel Hoffman, Paul Bunyan: Last of the Frontier Demi-Gods (East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1999) Preface.

laws of this world do not apply,"⁹⁴ meaning that hero-worship is not necessarily a logical act even though the creation of a hero is based on a recognizable set of characteristics — specifically extraordinary battle skills and the reflection of societal values.

It is in the hockey-as-war image that the heroic hockey player is best created. The 1972 Summit Series, which pitted the best hockey players of Canada against the best of the Soviet Union, was grounded in the imagery of war. It was the epitome of the us versus them mentality because it was not only a series to determine hockey supremacy, but it was given the mythic feel of a Cold War battle. One of the members of Canada's team, Phil Esposito, said: "The country's at stake here. I mean, that's what I thought. It's our society against theirs" (Dryden and MacGregor 206). Players on both sides, as well as the people and media of each nation, used this series as a battle of the West versus the East. The Canadian fans attending the games in Russia played this up by chanting "Da Da Ca-na-da, Nyet, Nyet, Sov-i-et!"

Part of this war-like feel was encouraged (probably unintentionally) by the commentators, Foster Hewitt and Brian Conacher, who brought the games into Canada's living rooms. Dryden explains: "Foster Hewitt's voice offers some hint. Momentous, hollow with distance, filled with a sense of threat, it has a war-correspondent-at-the-front sound" (194). The sense of distance increased the mystery surrounding the series and the opponents who led such incredibly different lives than the Canadians. The battle atmosphere was reflected on the

⁹⁴ Bill Butler, The Myth of the Hero (London: Rider and Company, 1979) 6.

ice. Color commentator Conacher said during Game Six: "Foster, I can't believe it. Down on that ice, it's just sheer war. They're not sparing the lumber. They're not sparing the body" (211).

Phil Esposito felt similarly about his play. Already thirty years old at the time of the series, he had played many games and had experienced every type of rivalry possible in North America, but playing in the Soviet Union was something altogether different. Seventeen years later, in talking about the series, Esposito said:

To me, it was war. . . . I've often wondered — like, I've never shot a deer. I've never shot anything in my life. I've never hunted. I'm just not that type of guy. But there's no doubt in my mind that I think I would have killed to win. I would have done *anything* to win. Absolutely anything. I think in war, maybe that's what happens. (211)

From this "war," heroes were born. Earle explains: "There was an element of heroic daring in the fact of a middle power contending with the largest national land mass in the world, a nuclear-armed super-power at the time, for hockey supremacy. . . . The very audacity of the attempt seemed heroic" (118).

The 1972 series was as close to war as hockey can probably be, and with contemporary globalization this will probably never happen again. The series was played during the middle of the Cold War, when the Iron Curtain kept the East hidden from the rest of the world. The fall of the Iron Curtain and the globalization that has rapidly followed makes the whole world more accessible, and hockey has followed suit by having as many European NHL

players as North American. Reflecting this same idea, Phil Coffey writes that it was not very long ago that games, like the 1972 series, were a battle between a North American "us" and a European "them." However, he adds: "Not surprisingly, times have changed in a big way since the 1970s and '80s. "'They' in most respects, have become 'us' and vice versa."⁹⁵

However, hockey games can be battles on a smaller scale. Rivalries exist between teams in every league at every level, and it is in this arena that heroes are born. The promising rookie becomes a star player, a seasoned veteran, a superstar, and with the right combination of skill, personality, and timing, he becomes a hero.

The poet Mick Burrs certainly understood the warrior metaphor when he wrote "My First Hockey Service." He writes: "I huddle among hockey parents, secular worshipers in their community sanctuary. They've come to watch their cherubs in uniform play in the bantam league, the Cougars versus the Lions. But I'll soon be given reason to believe that it's really the Christians versus the Lions."⁹⁶ Burrs compares this hockey game played by 13-15 year-olds with battles in the Roman coliseums when early Christians were sentenced to fighting hungry lions as punishment for practicing their faith. While this is not a war situation, it is certainly a battle — a fight to the death. In agreement with the battle metaphor, the hockey equipment company Sher-Wood Corp. Ltd. makes

⁹⁵ Phil Coffey, "'They' Have Become 'Us,'" 9 July 2001, The National Hockey League Web site, 9 July 2001 <www.nhl.com>

⁹⁶ Mick Burrs, "My First Hockey Service," That Sign of Perfection: From Bandy Legs to Beer Legs Poems and Stories on the Game of Hockey, Ed. John B. Lee (Windsor: Black Moss Press, 1995) 88.

and sells a tee-shirt that reads "Hockey is War."

Earlier it was mentioned that when thinking of the word "myth" one often thinks first of classical myth — the gods of Greece and Rome. Although those characters may seem a far cry from a modern hockey player, seeing the relation between them is actually not such a stretch, as Lenk suggests:

The athlete incorporates "a *mythical ideal*." Is he, then, a Hercules or Prometheus, or sometimes even a Narcissus? The ideal of cultural achievement beyond the requirements of survival and everyday affairs somehow makes man the culturally creative, spiritual, intellectual, and symbolic being he is. . . . The athlete can be interpreted as representing the "myth," instantiating a sort of "mythical" figure of a Herculean-Promethean kind; he is a *cultural god*, capable of extraordinary feats which can only be accomplished by complete devotion. (44)

Lenk suggests that modern athletic heroes are the gods of modern society. To delve further into this idea and to try to understand it fully, it is necessary to look to the conclusions of Peter Williams in his book *The Sports Immortals: Deifying the American Athlete*.⁹⁷

The first thing it is necessary to understand is that there is a universal, innate impulse to create myths. Carl Gustav Jung believed that this impulse is due to the existence of what he called "archetypes." He said these are unconscious "primordial images [that are] residues of functions from man's

⁹⁷ Peter Williams, *The Sports Immortals: Deifying the American Athlete* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994).

animal ancestry" (qtd. in Williams 6-7).⁹⁸ One could say that archetypes are like patterned forms that the human unconscious instinctively attempts to fill.

The creation of gods is an archetypal pattern formation. Many agree that at least in primitive cultures, gods were manifestations of archetypal forms. As Williams says, this occurs "by 'filling' the eternal and universal archetypal 'slots'" (7), which can happen in several different ways. Gods can be created out of ideas or concepts — the omnipotent, for example; they can also be personifications of natural objects, such as animals, as Johan Huizinga has suggested;⁹⁹ and, in the belief of Sigmund Freud, gods can be constructions based on the deification of actual human models. As Williams says: "In other words, the first gods were imagined, metamorphosed, or transfigured, the form of the archetype being incarnate in one of these ways" (7).

Athletes in modern society are deified in exactly the same way, fulfilling the need for the same archetypal forms that early humans innately created. In response to the outcry that there are no modern heroes, Oriard says, "the star athlete may be a diminished hero, but he is our only link to the Adonises and Galahads of the past" (220). Williams likewise relates modern athlete-heroes to classical god-heroes, especially the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus, who are archetypal in relation to age, which is certainly a major issue with athletes. Since athletics, and especially the rough contact sports like hockey, are so dependent upon physical fitness, extremities in age — either the very young

⁹⁸ Examples are conveniently located in Williams. See Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (New York: Meridian, 1956) 76, 109.

⁹⁹ See Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens (Boston: Beacon, 1950).

rookie, or the especially seasoned veteran — are usually quite noticeable.

Apollo was the god of prophesy, music, and healing, and he is especially associated with spirit of the mind. This was an archetype that the Greeks felt the need to construct, as does the modern collective unconscious. The Apollonian figure is a young athlete who shows particular talent, despite his young age. As Williams says, “we tend to admire a young Apollonian who is unusually mature or savvy for his age, since he’s supposed to be a greenhorn, a fool, a silly ‘rook’” (51). The NHL, for example, celebrates the Apollonian player each year with the Calder Memorial Trophy given to the rookie of the year.

Conversely, the Dionysian figure is an older, more mature athlete who, despite his age, is still just as spirited and effective on the ice. Dionysus was, appropriately, the Greek god associated with the body and physical energy. Williams suggests that “the older the Dionysian athlete gets, the more sympathy we tend to feel and the more we admire his triumphs” (51).

Related to the idea that athletes are archetypal gods is that athletes take part in an archetypal journey. Williams suggests that not only do athletes fit into innate slots in the collective unconscious, but they also are seen to travel along a well-known path, fulfilling a plot laid out for them. Before beginning the explanation, allow Oriard to provide his opinion:

It appears at first glance ludicrous to consider the hero of myth and the athlete-hero as analogous . . . but the comparison is justified on two grounds. First . . . the sources [of the character of the athlete-hero] may

be the same sources that spontaneously produce mythic symbols. . . .
Second, the psychoanalytical approach to myth, adopted by Otto Rank, Joseph Campbell, and others, emphasizes that heroic myths are allegories of the process of maturation. (36-37)

That process of maturation is the athlete's archetypal journey, centered not on his real life, but rather only on his career path from rookie to superstar to seasoned veteran.

Looking at this pattern, one can see that it easily parallels drama. An athlete's path proceeds as a three-act play. In Act One, the athlete is in "Arcadia" waiting to begin his journey. He is a rookie, unproven, not yet known to the fans, and just hoping that he can make it to the next step by avoiding the "Underworld" of failure and obscurity. Arcadia is also characterized by a Separation, in which the athlete unavoidably must become two individuals — the public and the real, "the mythic and the biographical" as Williams says (44).

To reach Act Two, the athlete must pass a test which proves that he has the characteristics necessary to reach Utopia and to become mythologized. However, as Williams points out, even reaching Utopia does not necessarily mean finding the ultimate paradise; many athletes reach it only to leave again in a year or two. "The individual's mythic history is normally chronicled only after he's not only entered Utopia, but also seems likely to stay there" (141). This earthly Utopia is basically that time when the athlete becomes a superstar. These are athletes who have passed their Arcadian test, arrived in Utopia, and stayed there. By staying, they have constructed a mythical life; they

have become mythical heroes.

Act Three sees the athlete at the end of his career. This is his mythical death, separate of course from his real death, and leads most athletes into the Underworld where they are soon forgotten. However, some athletes are able to maintain a connection to their mythical life even after death by entering Valhalla. This is when the athlete becomes a legend, enshrined in collective memories, the Hall of Fame, and on trophies. Very few make it to this point, and usually make it only after both their mythic death and physical death.

Maurice "Rocket" Richard is a prime example of a hockey player who traveled the archetypal journey. His mythical journey and life in Valhalla will live far beyond even his real death in 2000 at the age of 78. Richard's mythic status is emphasized by the profusion of supporters who still celebrate him in various forms decades after he stopped playing the game.

A number of events in Richard's mythic history have cemented him into icon status in Canadian popular culture. Geoff Pevere and Greig Dymond said of Richard that "the game has never produced a more potent pop icon. . . . He is, [also], the only player to inspire a riot, an interactive tourist attraction and a Grecian Formula commercial."¹⁰⁰ One of the greatest moments in Richard's mythic life occurred March 17, 1955 when he was forced to sit in the stands at the Montreal Forum wearing plain clothes after being suspended by Clarence Campbell, president of the NHL, for not only the rest of the season, but the

¹⁰⁰ Geoff Pevere, and Greig Dymond, Mondo Canuck: A Canadian Pop Culture Odyssey (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, Inc., 1996) 82.

whole playoffs as well. Richard was suspended for a controversial violent incident at a previous Boston Bruins game, but to Francophone Montrealers this was another incident of Anglophone injustice, personified by Campbell. The first game following the suspension lasted just nine minutes before it exploded in a burst of tear gas. McKinley has a play-by-play of the following events:

The fans in the Forum were pushing and shouting and cursing their way onto St. Catherine Street, where they collided with the mob protesting Richard's suspension. The friction soon generated flame, leaping into the St. Patrick's [Day] night skies of Montreal as the mob rampaged along three miles of central Montreal, smashing, looting, and baying for blood. This would be the price that the snake Campbell would pay for muzzling their liberator, Maurice Richard. The country that had given the world hockey would now see just how powerful a social force that game had become, for it had just burst out of its icy arena and caught fire. (3)¹⁰¹

At the center of the riot was, of course, Richard. While this was no simple suspension to be talked about and forgotten, Richard was no simple hockey player. As McKinley says, "Rocket Richard was not just a hockey player, he was the human battle-standard who led French Canada to glory every week" (1). The war references are key because they establish Richard's status as a warrior worthy of becoming a hero. Like any good hero, Richard represented his followers to the rest of the world, being their voice when they had none of

¹⁰¹ The Canadian television network, Global, premiered a documentary about the riot called "Fire and Ice: The Rocket Richard Riot" on March 17, 2000, the 45th anniversary of the event. Writer and director Brian McKenna used archival footage and first-hand accounts of those who were there, including fans and players.

their own, and fighting their battles when they could not.

The riot over Richard's suspension is the proof that he passed the proverbial test to remain in Utopia. Williams said an athlete can reach Utopia without staying there, and that it is through remaining there that the athlete takes on a mythic quality. The riot is a prevailing myth, and a foundational myth, in the history of hockey, Montreal, and Richard.

In 1996, the myth of the Rocket was strengthened by an outpouring of support at the ceremony to close the old Montreal Forum. The Forum itself is a mythic institution in the history of Canadian hockey. It has been called a shrine and a church, and "the house that Maurice (Rocket) Richard built."¹⁰² During the ceremony to close the Forum on March 11, Richard was given an eleven-minute standing ovation by the capacity crowd. Journalist Rob Brodie of the *Ottawa Sun* wrote four years later: "It remains, to this day, perhaps the most spine-tingling, remarkably emotional sports moments I have ever witnessed on television. . . . If you didn't know about the deep regard French-Canadians had — and still hold — for the legendary Maurice 'Rocket' Richard, you knew it [then]."¹⁰³

Another mythic event in Richard's story came with his death on May 27, 2000. In Richard's hometown of Montreal, 115,000 people went to the "dimly lit" Molson Centre to pay their respects before his open coffin; 2,700 people

¹⁰² Sidhartha Banerjee, "Rocket Reigns Over Forum," *Montreal Gazette*, 21 June 2001, 21 June 2001 <www.montrealgazette.com>

¹⁰³ Rob Brodie, "Forum for a True Icon," *Ottawa Sun*, 3 June 2000, 22 June 2001 <www.ottawasun.com>

filled Notre-Dame Basilica for the state funeral that was attended by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Québec Premier Lucien Bouchard; and uncounted thousands of others lined the streets of the city to watch the funeral procession and to see the funeral ceremony on a big-screen television.¹⁰⁴ It has been called "one of the most emotional funeral services ever held in the ornate, century-old cathedral."¹⁰⁵ In an additional show of Richard's popularity, the funeral was shown live on at least eight television networks (Brodie).

Even Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte's sermon recognized the place Richard holds in the mythology of Québec and Canada. He began by "praising a man who transcended his sport to take a place in the cultural fabric of Québec. 'How can it be that Maurice Richard, who is only a hockey player, be a subject of such love and admiration?' he asked rhetorically, before obliquely drawing a comparison between the hockey great and Jesus Christ" (Bird). To even consider comparing Christ to a hockey player expresses the archetypal place that hockey player fills, and his heroic status in his culture.

Richard's popularity and heroism reinforces characteristics society values. It has been said that he was "just a simple hockey player . . . [who] didn't like the limelight" (Branswell 42-43), humble qualities our society tends to revere and qualities which are considered heroic. Branswell also writes of "the pride that he brought to the Québec people" (43), a very powerful mythical characteristic because an individual athlete can be given the mythic power to

¹⁰⁴ Brenda Branswell, "Celebrating the Life of a Legend," Macleans, 12 June 2000, 42.

¹⁰⁵ Heather Bird, "Adieu, M. Richard," Toronto Sun, 1 June 2000, 22 June 2001, <www.torontosun.com>

make an entire community or nation feel better about themselves by mythologizing him. This is what Brosnan means when he says that “fans want the player to be not what he inherently is but what they think he ought to be. . . . [The fan] will create players in his own image — a man making gods” (637). According to the article's statement, and other common discourses, French Canadians especially constructed Richard as a heroic and deified character at a time when they needed a god on their side.

A year after his death, Richard is just as much of a hero as he ever could have been while alive. On June 21, 2001 a 600-pound life-size statue of the Rocket was unveiled at center-ice of the old Forum, depicting the famous Canadiens captain seated as if on the player's bench. There have also been many dozens of books written about Richard, an arena in Montreal carries his name, a permanent exhibit in that arena dedicated to his life and career, and there is talk of renaming Québec's Highway 50 after this hero.

The creation of the hero-myth is, like all myths, dependent upon cultural dissemination and discourse. In other words, discussing someone like Richard as a hero, especially at a widespread level — such as on a national television show — permits the spread of that idea. Naturally, then, the press has a powerful link to the creation of heroes. This is the theme argued by Judith A. Cramer, Jon E. Walker, and and Leslie Rado, who say:

Sportswriters [and by extension, television and radio sports commentators] emphasize (and de-emphasize) selected attributes and characteristics of athletes and thereby create an image which is “event-

making” and also fulfills their own needs for press. This image plays to both audience as consumer and the values and interests of the reporter. Acceptance of the image by the public rests to a great extent with the fact that most people take for granted the press’s construction of reality . . . ¹⁰⁶

Because of their ability to reach a large number of people, sportswriters and television/radio sports commentators do have an impact on the ways that the public views and interprets the actions and characters of players. The public does tend to trust the opinion of those journalists because they seem to have the “inside scoop” on the players. However, what Cramer *et al.* fail to recognize is that sportswriters are members of the society as a whole and are not immune from the discourse of valuation. In other words, it is not that journalists necessarily create heroes from their own individual ideas, but that their ideas about societal values and who should be heroicized are directly related to those of the greater society and fulfill the same societally-determined archetypal desires. The critical point that Cramer *et al.* make is that “there would be no athletic heroines/heroes without the press because there would be no documentation of their actions” (181).

The myth of the hero is the ultimate mythologization of sports, wherein individual athletes take on constructed roles as representatives of the entire sport or an entire community. This is a participative action archetypal in nature and as such is part of the collective subconscious of humanity. Athletes can be seen as traveling along an archetypal journey of mythic proportions which brings them through various stages of stardom, depending upon a wide

¹⁰⁶ Judith A. Cramer, Jon E. Walker, and Leslie Rado, “Athletic Heroes and Heroines: The Role of the Press in Their Creation,” Journal of Sport Behavior, 4:4, 175.

number of variables, with the rare possibility of reaching the hero status. That most important issue surrounding the myth of the hero is that obtaining hero status is dependent upon an individual's ability to reflect societal values and to represent what the collective society has deemed to be essential to its identity.

Conclusions

Hockey in Canada is upheld as a cultural institution by a mythos that has worked its way into the prevailing hockey discourse. The specific myths are the myth of hockey's historical presence, the myth of hockey as the common coin, hockey as the myth of the Canadian landscape, the myth of a pastoral tradition, and the myth of the hero as a cultural icon. These are based on ideas that are prevalent throughout Canadian society, but which are naturalized to work within the discourse of hockey in Canada. These five myths are used to establish hockey as a cultural institution. When asking the question, how is hockey Canadian, these five myths provide the answer. In the following chapter, specific uses of the myths will be explored as they are applied in popular culture.

CHAPTER THREE POPULAR CULTURE

Introduction

Hockey in Canada is maintained as a cultural institution because of the myths which have become common discourse in society. It is one thing to say that these myths exist somewhere in space, but another altogether to point to specific examples of their place in Canadian culture. Once the myths have been defined, it is necessary to look at how they are used in various forms of cultural production including literature, music, and art. These three areas have been traditionally defined as existing on a realm of higher culture — the fine arts. Blending the lines between the fine arts and hockey is a phenomenon certainly worthy of exploration. The very fact that hockey has become a serious subject matter of serious media points to its impact on the culture and mythos of Canada. Hockey has obviously found a niche in the area of popular culture, as well, and this will also be explored in relation to the five myths.

Just as many anthropologists, sociologists, and cultural theorists have begun to view sport outside the confines of the highbrow/lowbrow continuum of cultural judgment, so can the creation of hockey-themed products be looked at as existing beyond those barriers. Toronto author Norman Snider says that, "the boundaries of highbrow and lowbrow have been obliterated; there is a love of kitsch and the common man that is indistinguishable from contempt" (qtd. in J. Jackson).¹⁰⁷ While hockey may seem on the surface to be perpetually relegated to a particularly uncultured, masculine realm that has its high point in beer commercials, the fact is that hockey has found its way into all facets of Canadian culture. It has been spotted in art galleries, has had its importance sung about at operatic performances, has been the subject of poetry, and is also common fodder for folk songs, children's books, and souvenir t-shirts. All of these are equally relevant to the study of culture in general.

3.1

Literature

Any work of art, including literature, is representative of forces which are occurring externally in the general culture. Robert G. Hollands wrote: "All literature is affected to some degree by broader social forces and relationships,"¹⁰⁸ so drama, poetry, and fiction about hockey in Canada is shaped by the same five myths which keep recurring throughout Canadian

¹⁰⁷ Jenny Jackson, "Return of the Big-Haired Babes," The Ottawa Citizen, 24 June 2001, C7.

¹⁰⁸ Robert G. Hollands, "English-Canadian Sports Novels and Cultural Production," Not Just a Game: Essays in Canadian Sport Sociology, Eds. Jean Harvey and Hart Cantelon (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988) 214.

culture.

Drama is a literary medium capable of expressing myth in both written and physical ways which make a powerful message possible. Rick Salutin's play, *Les Canadiens*, is a perfect example of convergence because it blends together the story of the Montreal Canadiens with the history of Canada and Québec starting with the battle at the Plains of Abraham. These two symbols — Québec and les Canadiens — are intimately tied to one another. Ken Dryden, who assisted with the creation of this play, said the Canadiens "are perhaps the most visible and accessible symbol of Québec."¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Maurice Richard is the personification of that symbol. As former Québec Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation, Claude Charron called Richard "one of the original men responsible for giving a special meaning to Québécois life and to have encouraged the élan of the Québec people" (qtd. in Salutin 7-8).

However, neither Richard nor the Canadiens had a part in the actual creation of this mythology. They were all just hockey players trying to win games, and it was the rest of Québec society that needed them to be something else. "The players' approach is not marked by a crusading zeal for something 'larger.' There is no sense of 'Let's win one for the embodiment of Québec's aspirations,'" wrote Dryden (8). The team did embody Québec's aspirations, though. It was the community's voice in the world when it had none. Before the Quiet Revolution and before the Parti québécois was voted into office, the Francophone community was like a defeated nation, but every

¹⁰⁹ Rick Salutin, *Les Canadiens: A Play* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1977) 7.

winter les Canadiens would take on the world and most springs they would come home victorious.

Richard is credited with being the élan that sent Québec into the history-changing Quiet Revolution. It was the collision of hockey and history. The Richard Riot in March of 1955 was called by Tim Burke of the *Montreal Gazette*, “the opening shot of the Quiet Revolution” (Salutin 14). Salutin thinks it is both the absolute culmination of everything that the Canadiens meant to Québec, but also the night that the myth of the Canadiens was no longer necessary. “By spilling out of the Forum and into the streets, the fans seemed to say, ‘This hockey arena will no longer contain the feelings we have been expressing within it’” (14).

These are the ideas explored in *Les Canadiens*. Act One explores the myth, starting with the death of Wolfe and the defeat of Québec on the Plains of Abraham. This scene easily morphs into the early days of the Canadiens hockey team. Martin Knelman says, “In Salutin’s view, what the Canadiens team represented was a suppressed manifestation of the French-Canadian nationalism that had been forced to go underground by events on the Plains of Abraham.”¹¹⁰ The battle on the Plains of Abraham, and the defeat of the French, is expressed in the play as the beginning of suppression of Québécois nationalism, which leads to the development of hockey as a means of finding a sense of self. There is a consciousness that, although the French lost the battle on the Plains, they would not lose the battle on the ice — and they were

¹¹⁰ Martin Knelman, “Hello, Fans! It’s Canada Night in Hockey,” *Saturday Night* (Jan.-Feb. 1978) 61.

the same battle.

The idea of passing the torch is an integral part of the whole play, imagery drawn once again from the poem "In Flanders Fields." In the first act, a dying French farmer who has shot Wolfe passes his rifle to his son; the rifle then becomes a hockey stick and the boy becomes Georges Vezina, beginning the tradition of hockey in French-Canada and of les Canadiens. The stick is continually passed on throughout the play from Vezina to Howie Morenz to Richard. It represents the symbolic importance of hockey as the Francophone voice and the one way the French could defeat the British.

Act Two sees the demythologization of les Canadiens at the time that the PQ is elected, and the whole act is focused on election day November 15, 1976. When the PQ is elected, les Canadiens become "just a hockey team." While the people once needed the team as a representative, now they had the power to represent themselves. Salutin says that the loss of the myth is not something to lament because it means the gain of a real voice for the people. He uses a quotation from Brecht as the theme of the play: "Unhappy is the nation that has no heroes. No. Unhappy is the nation that *needs* a hero" (21). This could be seen as the final passing of the torch; the team passes it to the French-Canadian people who are finally ready to hold it.

Two myths are essential to an understanding of *Les Canadiens*. Hockey as historical tradition is self-evident because the history of the Canadiens is symbolically paralleled with that of Québec to express the belief that they are

melded together and are dependent on one another. Knelman says, "Salutin sees hockey as a metaphor for Canadian history, with 1759 going down in the record books as the first great skirmish" (61).

The other myth which plays an essential role in this work is the myth of the hero. This play is all about heroes and their importance as a means of self-expression. It has been said that heroes represent the beliefs of the society which worships them, and it is obvious from this account that these hockey players in the *bleu, blanc, et rouge* are the heroes of a nation who gave voice to a people until they gained the strength to have their own.

Poetry is another medium which one would rarely associate with hockey. As Heidi L.M. Jacobs writes, "perhaps 'poetry' does not spring to mind when one hears the word 'hockey' . . ." ¹¹¹ However, just as all cultural boundaries have become blurred, so have poets discovered hockey as a serious subject.

Al Purdy was a Canadian poet famous for taking on common subjects and for using common language. His poems speak to the common person. British Columbian poet Susan Musgrave says Purdy "has become in many ways the personification of poetry, with his no-nonsense, small town Canadian sensibility as big as the world's. No subject is too small, too serious or too awkward for [him]." ¹¹² While writing about subjects to which Canadians can relate — beer, hockey, snow in Winnipeg — Purdy brought poetry to a wider

¹¹¹ Heidi L.M. Jacobs, "Hockey Writing in Canada." Northwest Passages Feature Title. <www.nwpassages.com> 31 July 2001. n. pag.

¹¹² Susan Musgrave, "How Poems Work: Say the Names by Al Purdy," The Globe and Mail [Toronto] (11 March 2000) D22.

audience and become well-known. *Globe and Mail* columnist Russell Smith lamented after Purdy's death that he was never given the heroic status due him while alive. "Now that Purdy is dead, he is turning into a myth, his poetry into a kind of lore. It's a kind of canonization."¹¹³

One of the subjects which makes up Purdy's canon is hockey. In the poem "Hockey Players" he takes on a number of the myths, but the most prevalent is the myth of hockey as the common coin of Canada.¹¹⁴ In this poem, Purdy suggests that the experience of hockey, the thrill of a goal, the roar of the crowd, and the camaraderie of players is the same in every part of Canada. It is even a brotherhood of common talent that allows for a national patriotism to arise out of being better hockey players than the Americans. Purdy writes: "For years a Canadian specific/ to salve the anguish of inferiority/ by being good at something the Americans aren't" (45-47).

Mostly Purdy's poem proposes that hockey crosses all the internal borders of Canada. When there is a breakaway on the play, the fans in attendance are suddenly united in a common sense of excitement which mirrors the way the players on the ice feel. That one moment causes everyone to experience the same sensation, which is also the same feelings of fans in all parts of the nation, regardless of language or province. Purdy writes:

we stand up in our seats with such a rapid pouring
of delight exploding out of self to join them why

¹¹³ Russell Smith, "The Muscular Sensitivity of a Beer-Drinking Poet: Just What This Country Needs," *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto] (10 June 2000) R5.

¹¹⁴ Al Purdy, "Hockey Players," *Being Alive: Poems 1958-78* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978).

theirs and our orgasm is the rocket stipend
for skating thru the smoky end boards out
of sight and climbing up the appalachian highlands
and racing breast to breast across laurentian barrens
over hudson's diamond bay and down the treeless tundra where
auroras are tubercular and awesome . . . (27-34)

This stanza expresses the tremendous sensation of joy; it is such a powerful feeling that it virtually rockets the fans out of the building and across the sky to mingle with the northern lights. This is not a solo journey, though, because the excitements are joined among all the fans and all the players, turning this rink of individuals into a unity of expression. Hockey affects each person in the same way. In this way hockey has become a common coin.

In breaking down the myth, however, one sees that there really cannot be a true common coin. Myths do not, of course, have to be practical. Purdy expresses this in the last stanzas of "Hockey Players," first by playing up the myth: "over rooftops of the world and all together/ sing the song of winning all together/ sing the song of money all together" (70-72). This is another act of coming together for a common experience, but this time the tone is not as pastoral. The joy is not as innocent because this joy comes from money, not the game itself. Purdy is expressing that while hockey may still be one of Canada's prevailing myths, it is not necessarily the same game that it was when a breakaway was all that mattered. The poem ends on a different note:

(and out in the suburbs
there's the six-year-old kid

whose reflexes were all wrong
who always fell down and hurt himself and cried
and never learned to skate
with his friends) (73-78)

The tone is one of cynicism. While popular culture celebrates hockey's power as a national institution, Purdy reminds us that there are some being left out of the game all together.

Purdy is not the only poet to delve into hockey as a serious subject matter. Another, though lesser-known, poet to do so is Shannon Bramer, who wrote "hockey sister poem #9," a poem which focuses heavily on the myth of hockey as an extension of the Canadian landscape.¹¹⁵ In this poem, the persona focuses on her relationship to her hockey-playing brother, using the language of the myth of the North as it is reflected in the virtues of the Canadian hockey player. The brother can even be considered a metaphor for Canada itself. Her brother is portrayed as tough, calm, and unworried. "[H]e grins at my mother/ when she cautions:/ lip cancer" (12-14), so dangers like cancer do not worry him; he is too tough for that, just as Canada, in the perpetuation of the myth, is strong enough to deal with outside influences such as Americanization. Another way the brother is similar to Canada is in his size. The sister says, "the truth is i [sic] admire him/ the largeness of his body" (1-2). This is typical of the ideal of the Canadian hockey player, who, like Canada itself, is large and strong. In addition to being strong and large, Canada is often portrayed as lonely, with its wide open spaces, huge skies, and small,

¹¹⁵ Shannon Bramer, "hockey sister poem #9," Antigonish Review 117 (Spring 1999) 32.

spread-out population. The sister says, "my brother/ is a lonely hockey player" (14-15).

The responsibilities and pressures that go along with playing hockey are portrayed as being a significant challenge, but because he fulfills the characterization of the ideal, the brother handles the pressures. "[S]lam/ into the hard white/ boards, occasional body check,/ penalty box & puck/ a heavy coin in his everyday/ pocket" (23-28). Being slammed into the hard boards, body checked, and sent to the penalty box, along with the threat of cancer, the loneliness of playing on a traveling team, and "the weight of his sweater" (3) are pressures he is able to handle with the ease of everyday occurrences. He takes these burdens and puts them in his pocket, ignoring their threat and laughing it off; yet he must always carry his burdens with him.

This is the ideal of the Canadian hockey player, such that the landscape of Canada creates an actual superior "race" of men. To go along with the ideas of the Canada First Movement, these are men who are "symbolized [by] the masculine virtues of 'energy, strength, self-reliance, health and purity'" (Berger qtd. in Mackey 30).¹¹⁶ Additionally, the masculine myth suggests that the brother is the "strong, silent type" — the reticent male. The sister is his voice, yet she is just an observer and is outside of the action. This reinforces the myth of the landscape, because in an anti-intellectual realm, words do not matter.

¹¹⁶ Mackey, Eva, The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada (New York: Routledge, 1999).

"Winter Sketch," although only four lines long, effectively illustrates the myth of the pastoral tradition.¹¹⁷ The anonymous author's graphic choice of words expresses the feelings put forth by this myth.

At night the neighbourhood rink
Becomes a compartment of motion
With the twinkle and slash of skates
And the whack of wood on hard rubber.

The "neighbourhood rink," the "twinkle" of skates, and the "whack" of sticks are common images in the pastoralization of hockey in Canada. The imagery this poem invokes is romantic, familiar, and comfortable. It reinforces the idea that hockey is a local, neighborhood activity that is personal, secure, and well-known. The imagery is naturalized in the Canadian mythos. In its symbolism, this poem exemplifies the pastoral image of "simpler, more innocent days when life was fresh and bright and bracing and friendship seemed forever" (Earle 113).

One of the best examples of hockey fiction for adults is the anthology, *Our Game: An All-Star Collection of Hockey Fiction*, edited by Doug Beardsley.¹¹⁸ This includes excerpts from novels like *The Last Season*,¹¹⁹ as well as a number of short stories. One of the short stories, "Saturday Evenings in the Church of Hockey Night in Canada" by Judith Fitzgerald, is the touching story of a young girl, her grandfather, her love of Gordie Howe, and her family's

¹¹⁷ "Winter Sketch," *Not Bad. Eh? Great Moments in Canadian Sports History*, Ed. Frank Cosentino (Burnstown, Ont.: The General Store Publishing House, 1990) 136.

¹¹⁸ Doug Beardsley, ed., *Our Game: An All-Star Collection of Hockey Fiction* (Victoria: Polestar Book Publishers, 1997).

¹¹⁹ MacGregor, Roy, *The Last Season: A Novel* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1983).

Saturday evening *Hockey Night in Canada* ritual. This story glorifies the history of hockey in Canada, and thus, is an example of hockey as historical tradition in Canada. It also is corollary to the myth of hockey as pastoral tradition because it represents hockey as taking one back to a simpler time. At the end of the story, the persona thinks back to her childhood and the fond memories of hockey and her grandfather, which are forever linked in her memory as a sort of personal mythology that is reflective of the society's collective myths:

Several decades later, my photograph of Grandpa . . . still hangs at eye level on my kitchen wall, right next to our favourite picture of Gordie, the one where the finest player in the history of the game first touched the cherished Cup, grinning deliriously, shorn skull and all.¹²⁰

Literature for children often focuses on the cultural myths because it acts as an agent to spread ideals and values to the younger generation. Of all forms of hockey literature, writing about hockey has been the most common and the most popular for children. Not only are there many non-fiction books available about superstar players, great teams, tips on how to play, there are a number of well-written stories and series in which hockey is the central characteristic.

The Hockey Sweater, by Roch Carrier, is one of the most famous pieces of Canadian hockey fiction for any age.¹²¹ This story touches on a number of

¹²⁰ Judith Fitzgerald, "Saturday Evenings in the Church of Hockey Night in Canada," Our Game: An All Star Collection of Hockey Fiction, Ed. Doug Beardsley (Toronto: Polestar Book Publishers, 1997) 29.

¹²¹ Roch Carrier, "The Hockey Sweater," Our Game: An All-Star Collection of Hockey Fiction, Ed. Doug Beardsley (Toronto: Polestar Book Publishers, 1997) 15-17.

issues, from hockey mythology to national politics, but the prevailing myth is pastoral. In this story, a young boy with a strong affinity for the Montreal Canadiens is given a Toronto Maple Leafs sweater, and has to deal with the repercussions of wearing the wrong colors and representing the wrong team.

The boy and his friends dream of being Maurice Richard, styling their hair like him, lacing their skates and taping their sticks like him, and memorizing every fact and statistic about him.

On the ice, when the referee blew his whistle the two teams would rush at the puck; we were five Maurice Richard's taking it away from five Maurice Richard's; we were ten players, all of us wearing with the same blazing enthusiasm the uniform of the Montreal Canadiens. On our backs, we all wore the famous number 9 (15).

This is the ultimate example of the dream of hockey which is manifested in the myth of hockey as the appeal to a boy's dreams. This particular boy dreams and prays of being Maurice Richard, of playing like Maurice Richard, of doing everything like Maurice Richard. To him, hockey is much more than just a game; it is an entire way of life.

Another children's book that follows the same myth is *The Magic Hockey Skates* by Allen Morgan.¹²² This is the story of Joey, a young boy who receives a pair of used skates that he is told possess the magical powers to grant three wishes. All of Joey's wishes center around his desire to play like the big kids, and especially like his older brother, Zach. This portrays the myth of hockey as

¹²² Allen Morgan, *The Magic Hockey Skates* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1991).

an appeal to a boy's dreams because Joey had a dream of being like his hero, Zach, which was manifested in his hockey skills. The dream and the wishes came true so much that, at the end, no one is able to tell Joey and Zach's abilities apart, which is the ultimate culmination of the myth of a boy's dreams. It is a pastoral idea — a youngster wanting to be just like his brother.

Hollands studied three Canadian novels about hockey — Scott Young and George Robertson's *Face-Off*,¹²³ John Craig's *Power Play*,¹²⁴ and R.J. Childerhose's *Winter Racehorse*.¹²⁵ These three books are all aimed at young adults, probably around middle school-age and certainly male. Hollands concludes that these books "suggest that, although corporate dominance is bad for hockey, there was a golden age when both players and owners were gentlemen, the game was less violent, and hockey was the cultural glue that held Canada together" (217). Following the myth of hockey as a pastoral tradition, these examples yearn for an innocence that has been lost, and a simpler time when the game and life itself were pure. It is the longing for a "golden age." These novels also contribute to the myth of hockey as the common coin of Canada since they long for hockey to be the "the cultural glue that held Canada together."

There are also a number of book series for children written about hockey. The most popular are the series of *Screech Owls* mysteries written by Roy MacGregor, who was a bestselling hockey writer before he started the

¹²³ Scott Young, and George Robertson, *Face-Off* (Richmond Hill, Ont.: Simon & Schuster of Canada, 1971).

¹²⁴ John Craig, *Power Play* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973).

¹²⁵ R.J. Childerhose, *Winter Racehorse* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1968).

children's series in 1995. Fifteen *Screech Owl* books have been published to date, with more to come, and there is also a Canadian television series based on the books shown on YTV. The popularity of these books is such that, as of spring 2000, there were over 700,000 copies in print; the web site (www.screechowls.com) received more than 1,000 hits each day; the author received 25 praising emails daily; and the books were being published in four countries including Sweden and China.¹²⁶ What makes this series special is that it combines hockey with world travel and mystery. Similar to the Trixie Belden mysteries of old, the Screech Owls are a small-town hockey team of kids who travel to exotic locales (Nagano, Australia, Waskaganish), always stumbling across "a baffling crime in need of canny kids to solve it" ("Pee-wee"). The mythic dimension is found in as much the series' widespread popularity across Canada among both language groups and both sexes, as in its content.

In addition to a widespread popularity, hockey books have a long history in Canada. The first book on the subject of hockey was published in Montreal in 1899.¹²⁷ Called *Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game*, the 122-page book was written by Arthur Farrell, who was also an accomplished hockey player. Farrell played four pre-NHL seasons for the Montreal Shamrocks from 1896 through 1901 and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1965. There are only three known copies of this book still in existence; one copy held at London's British Library was destroyed in air raids during World War II,¹²⁸ but

¹²⁶ "Pee-wee Hockey, Big League Sales," The Globe and Mail [Toronto] (18 March 2000) D19.

¹²⁷ Farrell, Arthur, *Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game* (Montreal, 1899).

¹²⁸ Phil Stamp, ed., "A to Z Encyclopaedia of Ice Hockey." <www.azhockey.com> 4 Apr 2001.

the library still holds another copy.

Farrell opened the proverbial floodgates. Over the years, hundreds of books about hockey have been published. In addition to glossy photograph-filled coffee table books, statistical accounts, and player biographies, hockey has found its way into a great number of works of fiction by Canadian authors of every genre, including drama, poetry, novels, short stories, and children's books. The number of hockey books published annually in Canada seem to rise every year as "publishers large and small, mainstream and literary, have discovered that Canadians have a huge appetite for hockey books."¹²⁹

3.2

Music

Hockey has also been represented and mythologized in just about every musical genre imaginable from folk to pop and punk to opera. Like literature and visual arts, music also is reflective of the beliefs, themes, and mythologies of the broader culture. While covering a wide-range of genres, the songs which have been written about hockey in Canada have also taken on a wide-ranging subject matter mixing different media in blends of high and low cultures.

The highest level of music on the sliding cultural judgment scale is definitely opera. It is the least accessible form of music for the masses, and in some ways, like poetry, is the least understood. The "highfalutin'" aspect of the

¹²⁹ D'arcy Jenish, "For Armchair Stickhandlers," Maclean's, 8 Jan. 1996, 72.

art form has even become a societal joke. It is next to impossible to imagine a blending of opera with hockey. However unlikely it may sound, there is a serious hockey opera.

Game Misconduct, a one-act performance by composer Leslie Uyeda and librettist Tom Cone premiered at Festival Vancouver in British Columbia August 11, 2000. However, this is not the first hockey opera to take the stage in Canada. In 1994 an operatic farce was performed in Toronto called *The Loves of Wayne Gretzky*, which centered around a fictional homosexual relationship between Gretzky and Mario Lemieux.¹³⁰ Also, a writer with the online arts magazine *bossa nova ink* took a chance at rewriting Mozart's *Don Giovanni* "for the power play age," ending ceremoniously with an operatic "Eh!"¹³¹ On the other hand, as Stu Hackel says, "*Game Misconduct* is serious business" (Hackel).

Like many traditional operas, *Game Misconduct* focuses on loss; in this case, it is the loss of a national pastime and a national mythology in the context of a capitalist, global change that takes center stage. The premise of the opera rests on seven fans and one food vendor who are watching a pivotal NHL playoff game between a Canadian team and an American team in an old Canadian arena that is to be demolished following the season. The spectators experience a sense of loss of identity because they feel their game is being taken from them by increased American domination of the market, a

¹³⁰ Stu Hackel, "Opera Night in Canada." 15 Aug. 2000, 27 Jan. 2001 <www.foxsports.com>

¹³¹ John Scanlon, "Hockey Night at the Met." *Bossa Nova Ink* 15 Oct. 2000, 27 Jan. 2001 <www.bossanovaink.ws> 3.

phenomenon which Canadian NHL fans have seen repeatedly. One of the characters, Mr. McMaster, exclaims during the performance: "Welcome. Welcome to the last chance for Canada" (qtd. in Adams).¹³² Composer Uyeda explains: "I grew up worshiping the Montreal Canadiens. I am still faithful (and at this time rather discouraged). . . . The game is changing. Hockey is no longer 'our game' and much has been written about this loss" (qtd. in Deutsch).¹³³ She also adds: "We wanted to write an opera about longing and identity. We see the game through the eyes of the fans and we see into their lives through the game" (qtd. in Hackel).

In another stab at tradition, this opera ends tragically. The game is lost; the arena is demolished; a marriage is extinguished. At the finale, the ensemble assembles at the arena's rubble to sing "Un Canadien errant" — "a missing Canadien" — an old French Canadian folk song about the nineteenth-century forced migration of Acadians to Louisiana and New England. "In the case of *Game Misconduct*, it is not the people who are leaving Canada, but Canada's game leaving the people" (Hackel).

While this 90-minute opera is lamenting the loss of a Canadian mythology, it is also very much focused on creating and perpetuating myth. The myth of the pastoral tradition and the myth of hockey as a historical presence are at work in this opera. Its message is that the game of hockey is "our

¹³² Noah Adams, "Profile: New Canadian Opera by Leslie Uyeda is Based on Hockey and its Importance to Canadian Nationalism," NPR's All Things Considered 11 Aug. 2000, Electric Library Canada, 27 Jan. 2001 <www.elibrary.ca>, n. pag.

¹³³ R.W. Deutsch, "New Opera Scores With Hockey," 2 Aug. 2000, 27 Jan. 2001. <www.sonicnet.com> n. pag.

game," the Canadian game, and that Americans have no right to it, no history of it, and no mythology to uphold it; and because of this, the game will be lost, as will, in some ways, the whole fabric of Canadiana. When this one game represents all of Canada and what it means to be Canadian, it is an obvious statement about the power of the game in Canadian culture. When the game is lost, identities are lost with it. The eight spectators at Uyeda's unseen game have lives that are tied to the game of hockey and its overwhelming mythology. Without the myths, they are left with a loss of identity and a loss of social connection. Opera is an incredibly emotional expression, and *Game Misconduct* pulls all the emotional strings.

Classical music is another high culture medium which hockey has infiltrated. This is another case of convergence where different types of mediums come together to create something new and different. The theme for CBC's *Hockey Night in Canada* is one such example.¹³⁴ The song itself was written in a classical style, but for a television show and about hockey. The theme has been called "Canada's unofficial national anthem, [and] is so entrenched in [Canadian] culture, it's hard to believe it's only been around since 1967" (Pevere and Dymond 88). At that time, the classically-trained musician Dolores Claman was commissioned by the CBC to "make [the tune] like the theme to an adventure show."¹³⁵ She said, "I was thinking about how great people feel when a goal is scored. . . . It was kind of goose-pimple raising, something to raise your spirit, and it worked" (Spaner 609). The feeling

¹³⁴ Delores Claman, *Hockey Night in Canada Theme*, 1967.

¹³⁵ David Spaner, "From Hollywood Hockey to Puck Rock. Pop Culture Cross Pollenization: Hockey on Film, Television and Disc," Total Hockey: The Official Encyclopedia of the National Hockey League, Ed. Dan Diamond (Kansas City: Total Sports Publishing, 1998) 609.

and the emotion of hockey is something which is induced by people having a shared mythology and a collective emotional memory, which arise out of historical tradition and a mass knowledge of the game.

The importance of this song is that it is easily recognized and that it has influenced many Canadian musicians of even different musical styles. It has been rerecorded by a number of Canadian pop bands, including the Shuffle Demons in 1988 (609). Claman points out that the song is popular among both French- and English-speaking Canadians. She said, "In Canada, hockey is a kind of link. The song wasn't regional. It was for all of Canada" (609). This is an indication of the myth of hockey as a common coin, which carries the belief that a song about hockey, like the game itself, can cross language, political, and regional barriers, bringing an incongruous people together.

Hockey songs are also increasing in popularity. Nicholas Jennings said, "Call it puck rock or rock 'n' hockey, but an increasing number of musicians are playing — and singing about — Canada's national game. . . . Meanwhile, hockey songs have become a legitimate sub-genre of Canadian music."¹³⁶ He cites the example of a 6-cd compilation series of songs popular at NHL arenas. The Contact series by Toronto's Attic Records had sold 300,000 copies by the end of 2000 (51). Dave Bidini, who has written books about both hockey and Canadian music, and who is a member of the band, the Rheostatics, said: "People are always saying you should write about what you

¹³⁶ Nicholas Jennings, "Music: Rock 'n' Hockey: More and More Artists are Playing, and Singing About, Canada's Sport," Maclean's 11 Dec. 2000, Electric Library Canada, 27 Jan. 2001 <www.elibrary.ca> 51.

know. . . . It's a natural subject for many Canadian musicians because so many of us know hockey. And for a writer, the game really lends itself to poetry and romance" (qtd. in Jennings 51).

Considered the earliest example of Canadian pop music about hockey is the 1966 recording "Clear the Track, Here Comes Shack," by Douglas Rankin and the Secrets (Spaner 608). The song is about Eddie Shack who played two stints with the Toronto Maple Leafs in the 1960s and 1970s, during which time he was known as "Eddie the Entertainer" for his unique entrance onto the ice before games. With lyrics by Brian McFarlane, a prolific author and former *Hockey Night in Canada* personality, this song hit number one on the Toronto CHUM radio charts (Pevere and Dymond 89), and is listed as number 36 on "Toronto's Top 66 Singles of '66."¹³⁷

Although "Clear the Track" is considered the first song about hockey, an earlier song sung by a hockey player also made its way onto Canada's radio airwaves. In 1965, Maple Leafs goalie— and future Hall of Famer — Johnny Bower was approached by songwriter Chip Young to help sing a children's Christmas song for charity. Thus, "Honky, the Christmas Goose" was born. According to CBC, "the song received a fair bit of play on several Toronto radio stations," but was interrupted by the release of "Clear the Track."¹³⁸ Bower said, "I was on for a whole week then Eddie Shack came along and knocked me off the air," (qtd. in "Johnny").

¹³⁷ Craig Smith, ed., "Toronto's Top 66 Singles of '66," CHUM Top 66 of 1966, 26 May 2001. <www3.sympatico.ca/craig.smith/chum66.htm>

¹³⁸ "Johnny the Singing Goalie," CBC Sports Online <www.cbc.ca> 26 May 2001.

Many Canadian artists have followed in the footsteps of the Secrets, performing songs about Canada's national pastime covering all of the myths. Some of them include 1972's "Pandemonium" by Tommy Hunter, which was about Paul Henderson's famous goal; 1978's "Signin' with the NHL" by Canadian actor Bruno Gerussi; 1987's "The Ballad of Wendel Clark, Parts I and II" by the Rheostatics; 1993's "Rock 'em Sock 'em Techno" by infamous *Hockey Night in Canada* personality Don Cherry with techno artists BKS; and 1992's "Fifty-Mission Cap" by the Tragically Hip about the mysterious disappearance of Maple Leaf defenseman Bill Barilko (Pevere and Dymond 89).

Another of the most well-known and most-played songs about hockey is "The Hockey Song," by Stompin' Tom Connors, who, as an incredibly prolific singer/songwriter, is recognized for his hundreds of songs about Canada and Canadian life.¹³⁹ The 1972 song, "The Hockey Song," is a staple at many hockey rinks at all levels of play, in Canada and the U.S. It has also been recorded by a number of other musicians, including Terri Clark, the Good Brothers, Rusty, and the Hanson Brothers (Jennings 51).

This song follows the rhythm of a hockey game by having three verses, one for each period of play, separated by the chorus, which goes:

Oh, the good old hockey game

Is the best game you could name;

And the best game you could name

¹³⁹ Stompin' Tom Connors, "The Hockey Song," Stompin' Tom and the Hockey Song, Sound Recording, EMI Music Canada, 1973.

Is the good old hockey game ¹⁴⁰

The idea of the “good old hockey game” attests to the game's history in Canada. Here it is an old game and a game that everybody knows and understands. This is the myth of hockey as an historical presence in Canada.

When Connors uses hockey jargon, he assumes that his audience will understand. There is a lot of this in the third verse:

Third period,
Last game in the playoffs too ...
Oh, take me where the hockey players
Face off down the rink;
And the Stanley Cup is all filled up
For the champs who win the drink;
Now the final flick of a hockey stick,
And one gigantic scream;
The puck is in, the home team wins
The good old hockey game

The face off, the Stanley Cup — these are particular to hockey, and particular to a culture which knows the game. The imagery of “the last game in the playoffs” and the home team winning the Stanley Cup are things which invoke a national symbolism. Hearing about these things will raise memories and created images in the imaginations of many Canadians, which also goes along with the myth of hockey as a historical tradition in Canada.

¹⁴⁰ Lyrics found in Brenda Jones, Ill., Hockey Night Tonight: The Hockey Song, 3rd printing (Charlottetown, PEI: Ragweed Press, 2000).

The image of the Stanley Cup is tied to the historic myth because it is inseparable from its storied history, and history plays an essential role in its mystique. The Cup's history is so important that it is all inscribed right onto its exterior in the names of all those who have had the honor of holding it above their heads and drinking champagne from its bowl — or even kicking it into the Rideau Canal, as the case may be. It has become the ultimate symbol of hockey and all that it represents including all of the myths, but especially the game's history.

"Fireworks" is a song that recognizes the importance of a game that had nothing to do with the Stanley Cup, but was even more important to Canadian national pride.¹⁴¹ The popular Canadian rock band, The Tragically Hip, focused on the myths of history and the common coin in this 1998 song. The band, well-known for its hockey enthusiasm, "has been known to carry hockey gear on its tour bus and book ice time in local arenas for games between gigs" (Jennings 51). "Fireworks," which was originally given the name "Bobby Orr,"¹⁴² received a lot of air time and the album, *Phantom Power*, received platinum record sales several times over. Although the whole song is not about hockey, the first part is, and gives power to the hockey mythos:

If there's a goal that everyone remembers
it was back in old '72
We all squeezed the stick
and we all pulled the trigger
and all I remember is sitting beside you

¹⁴¹ The Tragically Hip, "Fireworks," *Phantom Power*, Sound Recording, Sire Records, 1998.

¹⁴² "The hip" <www.thehip.com> Feb. 4, 2001.

**You said you didn't give a fuck about hockey
and I never saw someone say that before
You held my hand and we walked home the long way
You were loosening my grip on Bobby Orr**

The song begins with a reference to the 1972 Summit on Ice series in which Paul Henderson scored "the goal heard 'round the world" that won the game and the series for Canada, and which is credited by many to have created the first true Canadian nationalism. That series really is something that brought all of Canada together in the ultimate enactment of the myth of hockey as the common coin. In 1972 the population of Canada was 21.8 million (Earle 119). 15 million Canadians dropped everything on September 28 to watch Game Seven (114) — 69% of the country's population. This is also the myth of hockey as historical tradition because now that memory lives in the imaginations of Canadians, even those who were not yet born in 1972. The game lives on in the mythology of Canada, and it is something that no other people in the world can share.

The line in "Fireworks" in which the persona is amazed by his girlfriend's ambiguity towards hockey shows the place that the game holds in the imaginations of many Canadians. He said he had never before seen anyone who did not care about hockey. That is a very telling statement about the widespread nature of the popularity of hockey in Canada and its role as the common coin.

Lynn Miles is a singer/songwriter from Ottawa who sings folk/country/pop songs about life experiences, and although she may not have the recognition of Stompin' Tom Connors or the Tragically Hip, she wrote a song about hockey that contributes much to the mythic discourse. She has been called "one of the most talented and unique voices to emerge from today's folk scene." (Murphy).¹⁴³ Her song, "Hockey Night in Canada," portrays hockey from a feminist perspective and also demonstrates the degree to which hockey has penetrated the daily lives and imaginations of Canadians. The musician Fred J. Eaglesmith said of Miles, "When she sings her songs it's as if her audience knew half the equation and are so happy to find that someone knows the other half" (qtd. in Murphy). The content of her songs is familiar and the symbols easily recognizable to the listener. In "Hockey Night in Canada," she sings:

It's hockey night in Canada,
there is a blue glow in every window
and I am walking home alone again
.....
But there's just these skating rinks,
and the boys always get their way
It seems like it's Hockey Night in Canada
almost every single day¹⁴⁴

"It seems like it's hockey night in Canada almost every single day" and the glow of the television set that is coming out of "every single window" testify

¹⁴³ T. Murphy, "Welcome to Lynn Miles First Web Page," Homepage, 2 Nov. 2000
<chat.carleton.ca/~tmurphy>

¹⁴⁴ Lynn Miles, "Hockey Night in Canada," Chalk This One Up to the Moon, Sound Recording, 1991. Lyrics quoted in Murphy.

to the prevalence of hockey in Canadian culture. The streets of Montreal are empty when it is hockey night in Canada because everyone else is watching the game, and she is left alone and cold on the street. She is alone because she is a female in a patriarchal society that excludes her from the masculine domain and the masculine mythology of hockey.

Miles' feminist perspective is apparent when she says "the boys always get their way" and "equal ice time is all we need to catch our breath and build our speed." The myth of hockey as a Canadian landscape, as it is expanded to include the hockey player as a rough, tough masculine character innately excludes women, and relegates them to an observer role. This is similar to Bramer's "hockey sister poem #9," in which the sister observes her hockey-playing brother from the sidelines, always conscious of his masculinity and her femininity. Built into the myth is a male-superiority, which is something that Miles is combating with this song. Earle also mentions this disparity. He calls this "hockey's regrettable 'male-only' encodements" (Earle 120). As women's hockey grows in popularity and voice, this myth will undoubtedly evolve to include this newer aspect of Canadian hockey culture.

3.3

Art

Visual artists have also brought hockey into their work. There is a large canon of Canadian art depicting hockey scenes that envelop the five myths. Forms of

art, from the high to the low, have embraced the mythology of hockey in Canada as a subject matter.

The most famous Canadian hockey artist is Ken Danby, who is well-known as a realist painter. It has been said that he "is one of only a few contemporary artists who have created paintings that make the transition from artwork to cultural icon."¹⁴⁵ Three paintings in particular, *Study of Skates*,¹⁴⁶ *At the Crease*,¹⁴⁷ and *Lacing Up*¹⁴⁸ have become Danby's most popular works, but the unveiling of a painting in honor of Wayne Gretzky's retirement — *The Great Farewell*¹⁴⁹ — is certain to take its place among those other icons.

Study of Skates was created in 1972, and was given to the 37 members of the Canadian hockey team who beat the Soviet National Team in the 1972 Summit Series. The image is of a pair of hockey skates and a stick leaning against a wooden door. "All of these objects show signs of long and hard use, and there is an odd feeling of weariness and abandonment in this picture."¹⁵⁰

Two myths are definitive in this painting. The idea of the skates and stick having been used for a long time implies that these objects have a history. Perhaps there are stories behind their scratches and worn spots. This represents the history of hockey in Canada, a game which has been around for a century and which has also been put to "long and hard use."

¹⁴⁵ Ken Danby, "Ken Danby Studios," <kendanbyart.com> 4 July 2001.

¹⁴⁶ Ken Danby, *Study of Skates*, 1972.

¹⁴⁷ Ken Danby, *At the Crease*, 1972.

¹⁴⁸ Ken Danby, *Lacing Up*, 1973.

¹⁴⁹ Ken Danby, *The Great Farewell*, 2001.

¹⁵⁰ Hubert de Santana, *Danby: Images of Sport* (Toronto: Amberley House Limited, 1978) 25.

Additionally, the sentimentalization of these objects sitting quietly in repose by a worn wooden door implies a pastoral mythology. This is not the door of urbanity, but rather of an old farm in the country. Likewise, these skates are not shiny and new straight from the sporting goods store at the mall. They have been around for a long time. There is no fast action surrounding these objects and they are just in a state of relaxation, as though their owner just happened to put them there to wait for the next game. This is what ideas of the pastoral embody.

Danby's *At the Crease* has been called "easily the most famous image in Canadian athletic art"¹⁵¹ and "the world's most famous hockey picture."¹⁵² The idea for the 1972 painting was conceived when Danby, who grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, confronted a masked goaltender while playing a game of shinny on a river (Christie). Danby said, "The image of the man in the mask obsessed me, haunted me" (qtd. in Christie). *At the Crease* portrays a solo goalie crouching as though preparing to take a shot. "The figure, with its massive leg padding, and huge padded gloves, is formidable as a tank. . . . The goalie looks invincible, but the small, bright, apprehensive eyes behind the mask tell of his isolation and vulnerability as he defends that rectangle of netting behind him" (de Santana 27). This represents the myth of the Canadian landscape because the goalie is shown as a tough, strong character whose fear is masked and covered by his goaltending equipment. This goalie may be apprehensive, but he is not backing away. In the mythology, Canadian hockey

¹⁵¹ "Ice Hockey Art of Ken Danby," Trillium Arts Gallery, 1 Nov. 1999 <www.trillium-arts.on.ca>

¹⁵² James Christie, "NHL Bars Canadian Artists," *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto] (13 May 2000) S1+.

players are as tough as the Canadian landscape, and as such, do not give in.

Lacing Up is another of Danby's hockey works. In this piece, all one sees are the skates, legs, and arms of a hockey player lacing his skates. "[E]very line in that strong body expresses courage and toughness, and an eagerness to engage in combat" (de Santana 29). De Santana even equates the hockey player with "a medieval knight buckling on his armor" (29). This is the ultimate expression of hockey as an extension of the Canadian landscape. This is broadcaster Ward Cornell saying all over again that Canadian hockey players are "tough, rugged guys from the north" (qtd. in Earle 110). The figure in *Lacing Up* is definitely tough and rugged.

Danby's most recent hockey painting is *The Great Farewell*, and is the official retirement portrait of Gretzky. This painting reflects another act of convergence; this time between science, art, and hockey. Danby used an astronomy computer program to determine the exact position of the night sky directly above Gretzky at the moment he finished his last NHL game, and then painted a portrait of Gretzky against the accurate starry background. Danby has since been inspired to write a book about this process because of the symbolism he found in comparing Gretzky with the particular alignment of the night sky, including repeating occurrences of the numbers 9 and 99, which was Gretzky's number.

This painting reflects the mythology of a hero in the making. Just as much has already been said about the heroic status of Maurice Richard,

Gretzky is on his way to taking a similar role. The difference is that Gretzky is still living, and thus still has the opportunity to fall from Valhalla. The relation of Gretzky to the stars is appropriate in that he is a superstar and his popularity has proverbially reached the stars. This is reflected in the fact that thousands of copies of this painting were ordered before it was even released (Danby, "Studio").

The cultural significance of hockey art was displayed when the National Hockey League commissioned twelve artists from across Canada to create works to sell at an online auction, the 2000 Hockey Fights Cancer Dodge On-Line Charity Auction.¹⁵³ The NHL's Visions of Hockey Collection raised \$50,036 USD to benefit the charity Hockey Fights Cancer.¹⁵⁴ The whole auction, which also included eighty-eight pieces of unique hockey memorabilia, from game-worn and autographed jerseys to trips to NHL games in Japan and an NHL-edition Dodge Viper, raised a total of \$418,000 USD ("National Hockey League"). According to the NHL, Visions of Hockey is "a collection of hockey-themed artwork that pays tribute to the sport and its significance to the culture of Canada."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ For the 2001 NHL All Star Game in Denver, Colorado, the NHL conducted a repeat of its successful auction and art show. However, the artists who contributed to this show had to be citizens of the United States — a controversial decision in Canada where hockey art is a popular genre. James Christie wrote in the *Globe and Mail*: "It will be a marquee event for images of Canada's national game — but it's no masterpiece for Canadian artists." He even suggested that Americans lack the experience to paint about hockey, and that American artists may not care enough about the game to submit works.

¹⁵⁴ National Hockey League, "\$418,000 Raised for Hockey Fights Cancer," 13 April 2000 <www.nhl4dids.com>

¹⁵⁵ National Hockey League, "Visions of Hockey: The Art Collection," The National Hockey League Web site, 13 April 2000 <www.nhl.com>

Because these are works specifically chosen to show the significance of hockey to the culture of Canada, it is natural that they are full of the imagery of the hockey mythologies. Two particularly fitting examples are deserving of further exploration. One is *St. Hippolyte Skating Party* by William Roy Brownridge of Calgary, Alberta.¹⁵⁶ The other is *Pick-up Game in Westmount* by Michel Lapensee of Lachine, Québec.¹⁵⁷

St. Hippolyte Skating Party depicts an evening scene: the sun setting on the prairie horizon; the community rink buzzing with activity; children, families, and couples skating around the rink as horses with sleighs bring more people; and people on foot come from all directions. About this work, Brownridge, who is originally from Rosetown, Saskatchewan, said:

The open-air skating rink is a powerful image recurring in my work. It is full of memories and meaning from my childhood. Even though I could not skate, the rink drew me like a magnet. It was the village stage. One day it was a field of ice to play on, next, an arena for tough competition, and at night by moonlight, a place of mystery and romance. ("Visions")

This is the epitome of the pastoral image of hockey in Canada. The painting invokes familiarity, comfort, and peace. The playing children, the couples skating hand-in-hand, and the warmth of the light coming from the warming house make the scene very pleasant and romantic, as Brownridge himself said. This is what the pastoralization of hockey is all about.

¹⁵⁶ William Roy Brownridge, *St. Hippolyte Skating Party*, 2000.

¹⁵⁷ Michel Lepensee, *Pick Up Game in Westmount*, 2000.

Pick-up Game in Westmount shows an outdoor, neighborhood rink on which two teams are playing a game of pick-up hockey — one in the unmistakable *bleu, blanc, et rouge* sweaters of the Montreal Canadiens and the other in the equally recognizable blue and white of the Toronto Maple Leafs. This is another, different example of the myth of the pastoral. These neighborhood teenagers are in the midst of pretending that they are, in fact, members of the Canadiens or Maple Leafs teams as they wear the team colors and, on their backs, the number of their favorite player. Two players who are the focal point of the painting sit on the boards watching the game. On their backs they wear the numbers 27 of the Maple Leafs and 4 of the Canadiens, which are the numbers of the great players Frank Mahovlich and Jean Beliveau. The artist, Lepensee, describes his painting using the discourse of this myth:

Hockey has always been a great source of inspiration for me. In my early teenage years (early 1960s), one could not imagine hockey without kids playing on an outside rink wearing their hero's sweaters proudly. It is always with emotion and great pleasure that I lay on the canvas scenes that most of us can relate to in one way or another. ("Visions")

Another medium of art that contributes to and naturalizes the mythology of hockey by bringing it to a new generation is illustration in children's books. This is a slightly less cultured form of art than the traditional painting, but nevertheless conveys the myths of hockey in Canada. An interesting facet of illustration art is that it accompanies the written aspect of the book, and parallels the mythology expressed therein. Two such picture books are

Hockey Night Tonight: The Hockey Song is Stompin' Tom Connors' "The Hockey Song" in the form of a children's picture book, illustrated by Brenda Jones. All of the illustrations include people with expressive faces, whether they are hockey players during a game, the fans at the game, or a family watching the game on television. One picture in particular expresses a sense of the pastoral. It is a family scene, with a mother, father, daughter, baby, dog, and cat all sitting in front of the television which is tuned in to the hockey game. Mother and father are sitting on the couch with looks of terror on their faces. The mother is leaning into the father, clutching his shirtsleeve tightly in her white-knuckled fist. The father in his Montreal Canadien baseball cap is holding tightly to his bag of peanuts and looks as though he might cover his eyes with his other hand. Meanwhile, the daughter, who appears to be about age ten, sits on the floor in a Toronto Maple Leafs jersey and baseball cap, wearing a large smile. All three of them have their eyes intent on the television before them, ignoring the virtual pandemonium around them. The young baby has crawled to the couch's arm and is talking into the telephone. The tabby cat is on the back of the couch scratching the fabric. A baby bottle is upturned on the floor creating a puddle. The dog is sneaking popcorn from the bowl on the floor while the daughter unseeingly grabs handfuls herself.

¹⁵⁸ Brenda Jones, Ill., *Hockey Night Tonight: The Hockey Song*, 3rd printing (Charlottetown, PEI: Ragweed Press, 2000).

¹⁵⁹ Peter Shostak, *Hockey . . . Under Winter Skies*, Ill. Peter Shostak (Victoria: Yalenka Enterprises, Inc., 2000).

Although there is a sense of tension from the obvious division of family loyalty to the Leafs and Canadiens and from the mess in the background, this is, nevertheless, a typically pastoral scene. There is an overall sense of joy and of family togetherness. It is obvious that everyone in the family has come together for this moment, which is one of the most important characteristics of the pastoral. Opposite this illustration is the chorus of Connors' song: "Oh, the good old hockey game/ Is the best game you can name;/ And the best game you can name/ Is the good old hockey game" (Jones). This follows the sense of pastoralism.

Hockey Under Winter Skies is author and illustrator Peter Shostak's overwhelmingly pastoral account of growing up with hockey in the 1940s prairies. Images of farm life and one-room schoolhouses fill the pages of this picture book. Shostak is an artist by profession and named each of the illustrations in the book. While every page suggests the pastoral, one in particular deserves further attention. "Still playing" portrays a group of six boys playing a game of winter street hockey (Shostak 33). This is worth mentioning because it expresses the idea that hockey, and all its myths, are not confined to the ice rink. While street hockey does not have the same rules and definition as an organized game on ice, it is still pulling from the same mythos, as Shostak has in this portrait.

It is a pastoral scene. A few small houses, a church, a couple of old Ford pickup trucks, and a clear night sky dominate the scene. The six boys play under the sky, perhaps seeing with the help of a street light or two. There is no

one else around, no activity, except the suggestion of the goalie on the ground hoping to make a save, while the puck sits just in front of a shooter's stick. It is as though the moment is suspended in time. The most tense moment of a hockey game is when a shot is about to be made and anything is possible; yet in this portrait, there is no sense of tension. It is completely calm. The lack of activity, the openness of the space, the enormity of the sky, and the smallness of the boys, all offers the pastoral tradition in its epitome.

Photography as an art form has had a long and intimate relationship with sports. Before television, photographs printed in newspapers and on collectible cards were the only way for many fans who could not attend games to visually connect to the game. Photographs are also a means to communicate mythologies. The subject matter, the placement of objects, the lighting, and the mood can be manipulated by the photographer to suggest a message. While there are a number of books focusing on hockey photography,¹⁶⁰ another medium for this art is newspapers. A prime example of a myth-filled newspaper photograph is one which appeared in *The Globe and Mail*. Called "Searching for Some Shinny," the photograph portrays a boy walking in front of a grain elevator with a hockey stick and skates slung over his shoulder.¹⁶¹ Immediately the pastoral nature of the photograph is apparent. In black and white, the photograph could easily have been taken in the 1920s.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Andrew Podnieks' Shooting Stars: Photographs from the Portnoy Collection at the Hockey Hall of Fame (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1998). Featuring photographs from the 1970s, this is considered one of the essentials of a hockey book collection (Little 57).

¹⁶¹ Patrick Price, "Searching for Some Shinny," The Globe and Mail [Toronto] (24 Jan. 2000) A3.

Cartooning is an additional form of artistic expression which portrays the mythologies of hockey's role in Canadian culture. CBC Sports Online recognized this and in mid-November 2000 invited Toronto-area artist Charlie Teljeur to contribute regular twice-weekly cartoons called *The Instigator*. CBC says it was Teljeur's "passion for hockey [that] led him to create *The Instigator*," which acts as a traditional single-pane political cartoon focused on the politics of hockey.¹⁶²

Although most of Teljeur's cartoons contain aspects of the myths, one is a particular example. "Gretzky Takes Charge" from November 12, 2000 depicts a Moses-like figure with long, flowing locks and beard, a white tunic, and sandals. He is surrounded, ceremoniously, with a heavenly glow, and stands on a hill with his hands on his hips.¹⁶³ Below him, at the foot of the hill, are several hockey players in red jerseys waving their arms and yelling. One of the hockey players is carrying a severely battered and torn Canadian flag. The bottom of the cartoon says, "Gretzky Takes Charge." It is obvious that the figure on the hill is Gretzky and the others are the Canadian hockey players who worship him.

In November 2000 it was announced that Gretzky would be the leader of Canada's 2002 Olympic hockey team as executive director. In that capacity, as suggested by Teljeur's cartoon, Gretzky becomes a Canadian Moses leading the flocks of hockey-playing Israelites out of the slavery of poor Olympic

¹⁶² Charlie Teljeur, "The Instigator," CBC Sports Online, 25 Feb. 2001 <www.cbc.ca>

¹⁶³ Charlie Teljeur, "Gretzky Takes Charge," CBC Sports Online, 12 Nov. 2000, 3 Dec. 2000 <www.cbc.ca>

performances. The scene depicted is that of Moses on the mountain in the Sinai Wilderness, taking charge of the flock, waiting for word from God.

The very nature of political cartoons suggests that they be accepted as tongue-in-cheek, over-the-top expressions of current events. However, they also are always entrenched with a grain of the truth. This cartoon is a good example of the myth of the hero. Williams argued that there is a relationship between modern athlete heroes and classical god-heroes, and Teljeur buys into this idea by creating Gretzky as Moses — one of the most important religious figures of the Old Testament. This points to the way Gretzky is often portrayed in popular culture as a larger-than-life earthly-god. This reflects the same idea portrayed by Ken Danby in his portrait of Gretzky, *The Great Farewell*, in which the cosmos is linked to the hockey player and his divinity. This cartoon suggests that if anyone can lead Canada to the gold medal, it would be this god of hockey — or perhaps, this Moses of hockey.

3.4

Consumer Culture

Generally, when discussing something being “popular” — whether it be a television show, a musician, or a game — it is necessary to know how that popularity is judged. First one can look to the ratings systems that most industries have organized, such as the Nielson Ratings for television, and also one can look at sales, such as the number of records sold for a particular artist

and the number of tickets sold for a movie. However, beyond the systems built into industries, popularity can be judged by the consumption of additional products and by the blending of that product into other industries. An example is the consumption of hockey team jerseys by non-team members, and also the sale of team logo hats, jackets, socks, and books. The production of these cultural commodities is indicative of cultural popularity and is intimately tied to the manufacture of the discourse which goes along with the original product. Pevere and Dymond reflect the same idea: "... Canada is every bit as distinct in its approach to schlock as it is to art, and ... the former may indeed reveal vastly more of a national distinction than the latter" (Introduction).

It is not hard to see the connection between hockey in Canada and commodities. Looking around a hockey rink during a game, at many levels of the sport, one sees fans wearing the jersey of the team. Just as Chomsky and Seinfeld said, these fans have no literal connection to the game. They do not wear these jerseys because they are part of the team. The jerseys are worn because they are a commodity which was bought and sold. These are popular; they sell. The production and consumption of these products contributes immensely to the mythologization and institutionalization of hockey in Canada.

This has to do with the phenomenon of consumer culture, which is generally thought to have begun in western industrialized nations following World War II and the beginning of the Machine Age, with some characteristics present in smaller doses among some elite classes as early as the mid-

nineteenth century.¹⁶⁴ Changes in technology that made the production of goods and the spread of information about goods increase dramatically also allowed for such things to reach a much greater number of people, in all classes. This was the beginning of mass culture in the way it is now known. Instead of finding meaning in such social anchors as class, community, and religious association, individuals in the age of consumer culture increasingly found meaning in commodities and brand names. In other words, commodities began to take on symbolic cultural meaning that seemed to replace the social anchors that were so important before, and commodities actually became a culture unto themselves — a culture of consumption.

Consumer culture is “the notion . . . that, in the modern world, core social practices and cultural values, ideas, aspirations and identities are defined and oriented in relation to consumption.”¹⁶⁵ In a culture of consumption, as Hampson argues, “the symbolic qualities held in commodities (commodity-signs) have . . . filled a larger role as a mode of communication between individuals and groups. Critics have argued that the integration of commodities into cultural processes has continued to intensify” (7).

“Commodity-signs,” as Hampson calls them, are the crux of the relationship between commodities and culture. Commodities are infused with cultural symbols and signs, so the product’s set of symbolism conveys a certain, socially constructed and socially variable meaning to consumers.

¹⁶⁴ Keith C. Hampson, Consumer Culture and Social Relations: White Middle Class Nostalgia Thesis (School of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1994) 6.

¹⁶⁵ Don Slater, Consumer Culture and Modernity (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1997) 24.

When consumed, the symbolic characteristics that are applied to the commodity are transferred to the consumer. A consumer is in a continuing process of finding meaning in a product on an individual basis, and having meaning applied to him/her because of the social construction involved in the commodity which he/she chooses to consume. "Consequently, the symbolic/material commodity not only serves to identify and reinforce dominant cultural ideals, but also can be seen as a way in which individuals select from, and identify with, particular elements within this cultural milieu."¹⁶⁶ In this way, one's individual sense of identity is established by what one consumes.

Therefore, those fans who show up at the hockey game wearing the team's jersey did not put it on before the game simply because they did not have anything else to wear. Wearing the team's jersey is a conscious effort to express certain ideas which have been applied to that particular item by consumers — including the five myths of the hockey mythos. Thinking of Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater* and the importance of the sweater to the young Québécois is an example of this same situation. The sweater was not just a piece of clothing, but a cultural symbol. Putting that jersey on created a link between the child, his favorite team, his hero, and his peers. Doing so makes the individual part of something larger — the team on the ice that plays the game and a collectivity of like-minded fans. The jersey also represents ideas of team pride and support for the team. It makes the individual feel as though he/she has an influence on the game's outcome by somehow cheering the

¹⁶⁶ Robert John Higgins, The Commodification of the Wilderness: An Analysis of the Wilderness Recreation Market in Canada, Thesis (Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University, 1983) 120.

team to victory. Wearing that jersey also expresses a sense of territory by indicating "this is *my* team." The theory of consumer culture suggests that when one buys and wears the hockey jersey, one is buying into all those symbols which go into its total identity. That identification then becomes part of the consumer's identity because the consumer is reinforcing, validating, and normalizing the symbols that are part of the social construction of the material object.

This goes right along with the idea of souvenirs, which are objects that are used as reminders of special experiences, events, and places. "The actual physical presence [of souvenirs] helps locate, define, and freeze in time a fleeting, transitory experience."¹⁶⁷ The souvenirs that one chooses to take from a place are the items that one believes identify most with one's experience in that place, or with one's ideas of what that place represents. Therefore, souvenirs act as agents of identity for a place. They provide a physical, symbolic representation of place. Going back to Frye, asking "Where is here?" can lead to physical commodities which have the purpose of saying, look at this object; this is what this place is all about; this object is the physicalization of "here." Taking a souvenir from a place allows one to take a piece of that place home.

The souvenirs that tourists choose to consume exemplify what it is that they believe is most important about the place. As Gordon concludes, "souvenirs have a great deal to tell us about the way that reality was

¹⁶⁷ Beverly Gordon, "The Souvenir: Messenger of the Extraordinary," Journal of Popular Culture 20:3 (1987) 135.

experienced" (145). Likewise, the souvenir commodities that are produced are attempts by producers to manufacture a sense of place. This is the social construction of souvenir symbolism. Walking into a tourist shop, if a tourist sees shelves full of hockey paraphernalia, regardless of whether or not he/she actually saw a hockey game, he/she will come to the conclusion that the game of hockey is representative of that place. Therefore, souvenir consumption, like all consumption, is a cooperative relationship of socially constructed meanings between the tourist, the commodity, and the producer.

Most tourist shops in Canada sell abundant hockey-themed products. There are innumerable stickers, magnets, pens, and pieces of clothing that represent the local team, as well as Canada's relationship to hockey in general. An example is a tee-shirt available in many tourism locals throughout the country that says "Canada" across the top and then features a stylized drawing of hockey players below, thus implying the message that Canada means hockey. An even more blatant example that is available at many souvenir stands is a tee-shirt that simply says "Hockey is Canadian." This is related to what Whitson said about hockey taking on a representational role in the local and national community.

While literature about hockey has already been discussed, non-fiction hockey books are another example of mass consumer culture. According to Pevere and Dymond, "Books about hockey are the backbone of the Canadian publishing industry. . . . Hockey-crazed Canucks have an insatiable appetite for this stuff" (87). Kirsten Hanson, a senior editor at the publishing house

Macmillan Canada, agrees: "With hockey books, there's a wonderful marriage between the commercial and the culturally significant. They are important pieces of Canadiana, along with being obviously good sellers" (qtd in Jenish 72).

Hockey books are reaching an increasingly wide and varied market. In an article for *Library Journal* aimed at the development of a public library's collection of hockey books, Larry R. Little writes: "Patrons browsing the hockey section will vary in age and, with the recent growth of women's hockey, increasingly include enthusiasts of both sexes. . . . [T]he majority of users will still be the armchair expert who wants to take a nostalgic look at a past era or simply catch up on the latest news and stats."¹⁶⁸ While these books cover a wide subject matter to reach a greater number of readers, they can generally be placed into four categories: the player biography, the history, the how-to, and the criticism.

Player biographies are one of the most popular, and are usually, as Tim Falconer says of one, "little more than an extended fanzine article with plenty of pictures."¹⁶⁹ For the most part aimed at youth, with some notable exceptions, player biographies attempt to make the player into a hero and are aimed directly at the myth of the hero. An example is *99: My Life in Pictures*, an autobiography by Gretzky with the help of John Davidson.¹⁷⁰ Little suggests, "no

¹⁶⁸ Larry R. Little, "The Fastest Game on Ice," *Library Journal*, (July 2001) 55.

¹⁶⁹ Tim Falconer, "Review of Mario Lemieux, *The Glory Years, One Hundred Years of Hockey and Riding on the Roar of the Crowd*," *Quill and Quire*, 31 July 2001 <www.quillandquire.com>

¹⁷⁰ Wayne Gretzky, and John Davidson, *99: My Life in Pictures* (Total Sports, 1999).

collection is complete without at least one book on 'the great one,'" and says this is an essential title to have (58).

History is the other most popular genre of hockey books. These books are usually aimed at an older age group than the player biographies, and are often written for those adults who actually remember some of the events described. This category includes books such as *Century of Hockey: A Season-by-Season Celebration*,¹⁷¹ which covers the entire spectrum of hockey history from the 1800s to the present, and is recommended by Little as "essential for all libraries" (56). Also included are team histories, such as *The Leafs: An Anecdotal History of the Toronto Maple Leafs*.¹⁷² Books in this category are barely more than a collection of facts and statistics, but are obviously based on the myth of hockey as historical tradition in Canada.

There are also a large number of how-to books published each year. Included in this category are instructions for how to play, coach, and watch the game, as well as the rules of the game. Some examples are *The Girlfriend's Guide to Hockey*¹⁷³ and Dan and Jay Bylsma's *So Your Son Wants to Play in the NHL* which follows a boy's journey from Junior B to the the Los Angeles Kings.¹⁷⁴ By nature, the how-to books are exclusively fact-based instructional manuals.

¹⁷¹ Steve Dryden, ed., *Century of Hockey: A Season-by-Season Celebration* Plattsburgh: McClelland and Stewart/Tundra Books. 2001.

¹⁷² Jack Batten, *The Leafs: An Anecdotal History of the Toronto Maple Leafs* Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1999.

¹⁷³ Teena Spencer, Will Ferguson and Bruce Spencer, *The Girlfriend's Guide to Hockey* Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1999.

¹⁷⁴ Dan Bylsma, and Jay Bylsma, *So Your Son Wants to Play in the NHL* Chelsea, Mich. Sleeping Bear, 1998.

The final category of non-fiction books about hockey is the criticism. This is a much different category from the first three because, while they were based primarily on facts and statistics, the critical area is based on editorial opinion. These are the books which look critically at the game of hockey, which explore the relationship of hockey to culture, and which discuss changes to the game. Included in this category is Ken Dryden's *The Game* and *Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada*. Critiques contribute a lot to the mythos of hockey because they reinforce the myths by discussing and exploring them.

It is obvious that hockey has found its way into Canada's material culture and is an important cultural commodity both among local consumers and tourists who recognize its cultural symbolism. Mass produced commodities are materialized purveyors of the Canadian hockey mythos. The hockey arena has become the physical embodiment of the consumer culture of hockey. Housed inside the rink are all of the products marketed to the hockey consumer. There are souvenir stands built right into the modern NHL arenas that sell everything from \$2 pencils to \$1,000 autographed jerseys. The boards surrounding the ice are one big advertising medium. There is even talk of developing a method of putting advertisements directly onto the nets. The music played during breaks in play are canned versions of hockey fan enthusiasm. Like a laugh track during a sitcom, many rinks even play the sound of clapping while the huge jumbotron screen dangling above the ice encourages the passive audience to clap.

It is easy to focus on the NHL as the prime example of hockey in Canada. Its nature as a media spotlight focuses the mythologies on it more than on the backyard game or the minor leagues, but it is those other levels of the game which are probably even more relevant to the discussion of hockey in Canada because they touch the lives of more people in direct ways. 4.5 million Canadians are currently playing organized hockey at all levels, not even counting those who gather with friends to play on the local outdoor rink or who participate as the fans in the stands at a pee-wee game. The game's mythologies touch their lives just as directly.

The role hockey plays in Canadian culture is undeniable. The very fact that CBC broadcasts an annual *Hockey Day in Canada* program, which includes three NHL games and several hours of discussion of the game, points to the stability of the social institution that is hockey. In one sample week of television programming from February 24 to March 2, 2001, on the channels that make up basic cable, there were 72.5 hours of hockey coverage — an average of more than 10 hours of hockey per day that week.¹⁷⁵ This programming included everything from NHL and Junior A games, to shows like *The Hockey News* and *The Screech Owls*. Regardless of the format, whether it be a game, a talk show, or a drama, the dissemination and normalization of the mythologies was just as prevalent and active.

¹⁷⁵ Television Hockey Programming, Roger's Cable, Ottawa, 24 Feb.-2 Mar. 2001.

Conclusions

Canadian society prides itself on creating a balance of cultures, in which people of different backgrounds and with a variety of traditions can all live together harmoniously. This is commonly called the mosaic, in contrast to the melting pot theory often associated with the U.S. This mosaic quality of Canadian culture is reflected in its usage of the mythology of hockey. In a convergence of a wide variety of mediums, hockey has become not only the fodder for mass production, but the subject of serious fine arts. From opera to poetry, from painting to drama, from folk songs to cartoons, from high culture to low culture and everything in between and everything mixed together, hockey is part of them all. The myths are what bring everything together. The myths are found in every aspect of Canadian hockey culture and are strengthened and spread through their application in cultural production.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that hockey in Canada is a social construction with a set of meanings and myths which link it inseparably to Canadian culture as a whole, and often to what it is to be identified as Canadian. It has proved that hockey is a ritualized Canadian social institution upheld by a set of culturally specific myths which have been appropriated by the discourse of Canadian hockey, normalized and legitimized by that discourse, and then disseminated through media which are not relegated solely to the confines of the “popular” or “mass” cultures, but also to the “high” cultures of literature, art, and music, which contribute in turn to the reinforcement of the cultural mythos.

Noam Chomsky questioned why he felt the need to cheer for a football team to which he had no personal attachment. Others wonder why they feel a powerful pull to return to hockey, even after not having taken to the ice in years. In both cases, the answer is the same: sports fulfill a role in society as cultural institutions and as agents of cultural values. Particular sports — such as hockey in Canada — have become so infused into the cultural milieu that they

have become institutions unto themselves, with an entire set of mythologies to sustain their position. We are drawn to sports because the cultures in which we participate place a value on those activities creating a discourse to make us a part of that system.

The discourse of hockey was found to have a foundation in five myths which make up the backbone of the hockey institution. How hockey is Canadian is dependent upon the dissemination of these five myths: hockey as an historical tradition in Canada, the myth of hockey as Canada's common coin, hockey as an extension of the Canadian landscape, hockey as pastoral tradition, and the heroes of hockey as cultural icons. The myths emphasize widespread societal values which are appropriated into the hockey discourse and normalized through cultural production, such as news media, literature, art, music, and commodities. Because the myths are so naturalized into Canadian culture, they have become integral to Canadian identity, or what it means to be Canadian.

It has been repeated throughout these chapters that it is not necessarily "truth" which is at stake. Myths are by nature based in fact and then reproduced in "semiological" ways, as Barthes said (qtd. in Lenk 437), so what matters when discussing a myth is how people feel about it — the naturalization and legitimation — and mostly the active continuity of the discourse. One of the characteristics of these myths is that they are able to evolve to suit the environment in which they are valued, which makes it interesting to continue to observe them in order to see how they change over time and with differing

circumstances.

For example, many point to hockey as Canada's common coin, but there are some who are left out. Women are a group who are marginalized from the mythos. Although women are playing hockey in increasing numbers, these myths are predominantly gendered masculine, and celebrate the masculine game, the history of the game as men have played it, and the heroics of men. It will be interesting to see how the myths evolve over time to a more inclusionary position that recognizes women's contributions to hockey and the institutionalized hockey mythos.

Also interesting in the evolution of Canada's hockey mythos will be how the ideas change to reflect the twenty-first century. Much of the mythos is based on ideals of the early- and mid-twentieth century — a 1950s moral pastoralism, for example. As the new generations grow into these stories, how will they change them to fit their own world view? As hockey becomes increasingly international and global, and is no longer the cultural property of Canada (if it ever was), how will Canadian culture maintain this mythology?

These myths have been part of Canada's cultural discourse, in some facet, almost since the day James Creighton and his McGill lacrosse team took to the ice on Victoria Skating Rink. Along with everything else, though, hockey is being affected by postmodern trends. Whitson said, "hockey itself is being affected by changes that are making it less Canadian and less bound by Canadian traditions and values. The most objective of these include the influx

of European and American players, and the establishment of franchises in the rich and populous markets of the American south" ("Identities" 315). Teams are marketed now on the basis of having attractive logos and colors. It is the "Mighty Ducks-ization" of the NHL, especially as the league focuses more and more of its energy on attracting new audiences in places where there is no hockey tradition whatsoever, like Anaheim, California or Raleigh, North Carolina. It is hard to say exactly what effect this will have on the way Canadians relate to hockey. Gruneau is prompted to ask, "Is it reasonable to expect the national pastime to provide a stable anchor of meaning in a country that seems to be coming apart on so many other levels?" (277).

It is becoming increasingly harder to keep together a national community in the age of postmodernism.¹⁷⁶ Gruneau and Whitson explain: "It is important to recognize that national and global popular cultures today continue to be significantly shaped by contemporary capitalism" (272). In an increasingly globalized, capitalist culture, we are moving towards a more delocalized condition where sports interests are more consumer choice than national tradition. However, it could be argued that in a postmodern state which is highly fragmented, people turn to traditions as a means of stability in an uncertain world. While hockey cannot be a true value system or cultural glue for an incongruous society because of its largely capitalist hegemonic construction,¹⁷⁷ through the perpetuation of the myths it can still act as a

¹⁷⁶ Postmodernism is characterized by "the fragmentation of markets, the plurality of identities, unprecedented cultural mixing and matching, and a heavy dependence upon media imagery" (Gruneau & Whitson 272).

¹⁷⁷ I.e. the dependence of hockey on the rule of the market — "small market" has become a common term in Canada — as well as on advertising, the media, and purposeful constructions of the myth used as a means not of celebrating the game, but of selling the game. See Hayes Chapter 4 for more.

traditional sense of Canadian identity and culture.¹⁷⁸

Despite the changes the game has taken, the postmodern climate, and the globalization trends, hockey is still a large part of Canadian culture, as has been established. Maybe people have more choices now than ever before — to play basketball, or to go to a Canadian Football League game instead of an NHL game, for example — but, regardless, they are still going to hockey games, and when they cannot afford to see the NHL, they see a Canadian Hockey League (CHL) game. In the 1997-1998 season, more than 4.5 million people attended CHL games, and the rates of attendance have risen considerably every year since about 1986.¹⁷⁹ In second place that year was the NHL, with just over four million attendees (Chart 2). It may be a return to the grassroots of hockey, a return to the myths and the game in its purer form. As Whitson said, "Even though NHL hockey has moved into the world of corporate marketing and become a global product, and even if most Canadian cities are too small as markets to generate the revenue streams necessary in major league sports today, hockey in Canada is not dying" ("Identities" 316).

¹⁷⁸A particularly interesting example of the perpetuation of the hockey tradition, as a means of cultural continuity and identification, is the Web site "Hockey in Canada: A Nation's Passion," a virtual museum produced by the Canadian Heritage Information Network, a Canadian government organization <www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Hockey/English/index.html>. This example is especially noteworthy because of its strong usage of the mythic hockey discourse in an official nationalism capacity. That an arm of the government of Canada itself is perpetuating the institutionalization of hockey attests to the importance of hockey's role in Canadian culture. Please see Appendix A for text of this Web site.

¹⁷⁹Canada, House of Commons, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, Sub-Committee on the Study of Sport in Canada. Leadership, Partnership and Accountability Standing Committee on Canadian Sport in Canada: Everybody's Business. Chair, Dennis Mills, Dec. 1998, 22 Nov. 1999 <www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/36/1/SINS/Studies/Reports/sinsrp05-e.htm> 3:C.

What sets hockey apart from other sports and other games in Canada, and which helps to solidify its place in the institutional framework of Canadian culture, is its ability to cross the boundaries of local and national. Hockey is a game which is essentially a local pastime. A father and son shooting pucks in the backyard, a peewee team at the neighborhood rink, and even an NHL team that represents its city to the world — nearly all levels of hockey are centered in the local. Despite hockey's place in the local community, however, the game is celebrated on a national level. The spirit of the game, and most importantly the discourse of the game, is a national phenomenon that goes far beyond the confines of the local experience. Hockey is something which people have in common across communities, across physical boundaries, and across cultural boundaries. It is a particularly Canadian experience played out in the local and celebrated nationally.

Earle says that, "if hockey is just a game in Canada, then the Rockies are just hills on the prairies. The game, like the mischievous 'puck' itself, has the ability to ricochet and careen unexpectedly in and out of the Canadian experience" (108). In his drama, Earle makes a valid point. Most Canadians do not recognize how much hockey is a part of the fabric of their culture because they are just so used to it. In Canada, hockey is everywhere. The five myths, even though they often sound simplistic, overly-romanticized, and even sentimental, are applied in popular Canadian life on a regular basis, not only in the news, but also in fiction, in art, in music, and in the things that people choose to consume. These myths have become synonymous with the discourse of Canadian identity.

Chart One

1997-1998 Regular Season Attendance, Canadian Teams¹⁸⁰

Based on information from Leadership, Partnership and Accountability Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Sub-Committee on the Study of Sport in Canada, *Sport in Canada: Everybody's Business*, Chart 3.

¹⁸⁰ Canadian Hockey League (CHL), National Hockey League (NHL), Major League Baseball (MLB), Canadian Football League (CFL), and National Basketball Association (NBA)

Chart Two

**Canadian Hockey Association Total Season Attendance
1979-1998**

Based on information provided in Leadership, Partnership and Accountability Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Sub-Committee on the Study of Sport in Canada, *Sport in Canada: Everybody's Business*, Chart 2.

Table Two

**Sample Television Hockey Programming
Week of February 24-March 2, 2001¹⁸¹**

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Channel</u>	<u>Hours</u>		<u>Time</u>	<u>Channel</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Saturday, Feb. 24				Sunday, Feb. 25			
	1:25	8	5		1:00	8	1
	6:25	8	1.5			26	1
	9:00	22	2.5		3:30	2	0.5
	12:00	8	3.5		6:30	25	0.5
	2:00	3	3		8:00	27	3
	3:30	8	0.5				
	4:00	8	3				
	5:00	5	2				
		22	3				
		27	0.5				
	5:30	27	0.5				
	7:00	5	3				
		8	3				
	10:00	8	3				
		26	1				
total:			35				6
Monday, Feb. 26				Tuesday, Feb. 27			
	12:00	8	0.5		12:00	27	0.5
	12:30	8	3		5:30	27	0.5
	3:00	27	3		7:00	27	3
	7:00	27	0.5		11:30	27	0.5
	7:30	27	0.5				
	11:30	27	0.5				
total:			7.5				4.5
Wednesday, Feb. 28				Thursday, March 1			
	1:00	27	3		12:00	3	0.5
	5:30	27	0.5		1:30	27	3
	7:30	11	2.5		5:30	27	0.5
		27	3		7:00	6	3
					7:30	25	0.5
					8:30	22	0.5
					10:00	6	1
total:			9				9
Friday, March 2							
	7:00	22	0.5				
		27	0.5				
total:			1				
				Total 72.5 hours			
				10 channels			

¹⁸¹ Counting only those channels available on the basic cable plan of Ottawa's Roger's Cable. Looking at a greater cable plan would only add to the hours of programming, especially with all-hockey channels available through satellite.
Channel 2 = CICO (TVO); Channel 3 = CIII (CITY); Channel 5 = CBOFT (SRC); Channel 6 = CHRO (NewRO); Channel 8 = CBOT (CBC); Channel 11 = CFGS (TQS); Channel 22 = Rogers Cable 22; Channel 25 = YTV; Channel 26 = CBC Newsworld; Channel 27 = Sports Net Ontario.

Appendix A

"Hockey in Canada: A Nation's Passion"

Canadian Heritage Information Network

<www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Hockey/English/index.html>

Introduction

Hockey is a truly Canadian game, totally woven into our national fabric. As the game evolved in Canada and around the world, one thing has been constant, our country has produced the top players, the top administrators, the top teams and has laid the groundwork for hockey operations and associations that have been modelled around the world. This is Canada's game. If you are Canadian, you are introduced to the game early, and it remains a constant. It will be played all around you. It will be on television; it will be in your newspaper, on your radio and it will be discussed on the bus, at the bar or at work. Canada is hockey.

As Canada has become a truly multicultural country, its national winter sport has reflected this diversity. At the North American professional level, hockey is the only truly international sport, with players and coaches from all over the world. Here in Canada, the game also has a mosaic quality. Everybody plays our game - men, women, boys and girls, people of all ages, backgrounds, origins and sizes.

It's *our* game.

A young Sylvie Apps Jr. takes to the ice. Apps Jr. would grow up to become an all-star for the Pittsburgh Penguins.
© Imperial Oil/Toronto Hockey Hall of Fame

A truly Canadian thing - the backyard rink, complete with team logos at centre ice.
© Hockey Hall of Fame

The many faces of the game today - Patrick Laume, Chris Simon, Ed Jovanovski, Jutta Joseph, Mike Ribeiro, Jim Paek, Fred Brathwaite, Georges Larigue.

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