FROM NURSERY RHYMES TO NATIONHOOD

Children's Literature and the Construction of Canadian Identity

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Chapter Seven
Fact or Fiction?: The Making of Canadian History

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

(A. Muir, "The Maple Leaf Forever")

In his study *Colonial Myths: History and Narrative*, Azzedine Haddour writes that the study of history "is an active agency that makes the past pass into the present" (Haddour 2000: 1). This connection between the past and the present makes the manner in which a nation communicates its history to children, who represent both the present and the future, particularly significant. If understanding a nation's past can help determine its future, then teaching history to young citizens is of great importance. Examining early Canadian children's literature reveals the manner in which writers were exploring the nation's past, and sheds light on the ideas current in Canada during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[1]

As Canada sought to extricate itself from Britain's influence, it began to reassess its place in the changing landscape of North American and European relations. Canada shared many traits with other post-colonial societies, the most significant of which was the desire to articulate an independent voice and identity. Post-colonial critics and writers have argued that reclaiming the past is an important step in this process. As Edward Said writes:

> In one instance, we assume that the better part of history in colonial territories was a function of the imperial intervention; in the other, there is an equally obstinate assumption that colonial undertakings were marginal . . . to the central activities of the great metropolitan cultures. Thus, the tendency . . . is to treat the whole of world history as viewable by a kind of Western super-subject, whose historicizing and disciplinary rigor either takes away or, in the post-colonial period, restores history to people and cultures "without" history. (Said 1994: 35)

Canada was also susceptible to such views as, prior to Confederation, many considered it to be without a history of its own. Many works of history distributed in nineteenth-century Canada, both before and after 1867, centre on events and figures from England's past, viewing Canadian history in terms of its role in building and supporting the British Empire. As part of the process of constructing a distinctly Canadian identity, however, Canadian writers gradually began to reclaim their own past.

Following Confederation, "for the first time, historians spoke primarily to their compatriots rather than a distant power" (Taylor 1989: 7). Canadian historians began to examine the past from a new perspective, and by the beginning of the twentieth century this new approach to history included a revaluation of the pre-colonial era, and a growing interest in the history of Canada's native people. Some works of historical fiction and non-fiction create a picture of an earlier, mythical Canada in which the taint of its colonial status is lessened. Citing Homi Bhabha, Canadian literature critic Margaret E. Turner observes that in new cultures there is a temptation towards history that "Bhabha describes as 'the familiar quest for an origin that will authorize a beginning'" (Turner 1995: 15). History and the "quest for an origin" are among the themes that children's writers develop in their efforts to construct a sense of Canadian unity and national identity. From textbooks on Canadian history for the classroom, to historical poems, songs and novels, there is a clear connection drawn between having a sense of national identity and being aware of national history.

The literature of the day illustrates the belief that having a strong sense of Canadian history is of great importance to the nation's future. As M. Brook Taylor observes of nineteenth-century English Canada, the purpose of historians remained constant, being "to use the past to influence the present to shape the future" (Taylor 1982: 7). Children's literature further demonstrates that writers and historians were blending fact and fiction in their efforts to construct a new historical vision of the nation. In *What is History?* British historian E.H. Carr notes that "interpretation enters into every fact of history" and that facts "speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context" (11–13). The "facts" or topics selected most frequently by Canadian historians and writers of children's literature include the early days of the fur trade, Indian life in early Canada, the period of French rule and the military exploits between the French and the

English, and between the Canadians and the Americans. These tales of the past inspired a new Canadian mythology that writers hoped would help shape Canada's future.

History Textbooks and Historical Non-Fiction

Stories presented as true accounts of historical events from Canada's past appeared in history textbooks, periodicals, and as longer works of non-fiction. Both historical non-fiction and works of pure literary invention may contain some element of "fiction." As contemporary American historian Eric Foner observes, history "will be regularly rewritten, in response to new questions, new information, new methodologies, and new political, social, and cultural imperatives. But . . . the most difficult truth . . . to accept is that there often exists more than one legitimate way of recounting past events" (Foner 2002: xvii). J.W. Bengough (1851–1923) discusses the manner in which historical accounts can vary in a 1901 article that appeared in *The Canadian Boy*. Bengough was born in Toronto, and in addition to founding his own humorous weekly magazine *Grip* in 1873, he was also a poet and a cartoonist with the *Toronto Globe* and the *Montreal Star*. In this article from *The Canadian Boy*, he criticises what he sees as the traditional methods of recording Canadian history. Bengough considers it important to instil an awareness of the past in the nation's youth, and to make children feel that they have a role in their country's history.

Bengough is particularly concerned with giving boys a sense that they have an active role in their nation's history. The article opens with a criticism of existing accounts of Canada's past:

> When we think of the old days we call historic (as if we were not ourselves engaged in making history) the picture presented to our minds seems to be filled with grown up people, chiefly quite gray and venerable. Perhaps the habit affects historians as well as common folk, and that may be the reason why there is so very little mention of boys and girls in the books they write. . . . But then, of course, most of the writers who have set themselves the task of dealing with the History of the Dominion have seemed to feel it necessary to make their works as dry as possible, and no doubt think that to give space to such a lively, sportive topic as boyhood suggests, would be quite out of character. (Bengough 1901: 10)

Bengough recognises the role each generation plays in "making history" and his article addresses this interrelation between past and present, raising a number of important questions about the means by which history is constructed and recorded.

Bengough believes that by exploiting this connection between past and present, writers can make history "lively" for children. This can be done by sharing stories about children from Canada's past, which Bengough does by telling the story of young Frank Simcoe, "the son of Col. John Graves Simcoe,

the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, who came out to take charge of the affairs of the new province in the year 1791" (Bengough 1901: 10). In reality, however, Frank Simcoe is merely a device used by Bengough to gain the attention of his young reader, while he then proceeds to give an account of his father's role in Canadian history.

Other writers shared Bengough's view that Canadians needed to do more to educate children about their country's history. For example, *The Young Canadian*'s advertisement for a contest to determine the best new book on Canadian History shows that there were efforts made to promote this history and educate Canadian children about their own country, rather than about an imperial motherland most would never see: "We have no History of our country for our young Canadians—not a book that we can put into their hands, or pick up to read to them, about the land they love so well, and about the wonderful and romantic things that happened before our country was what it is" (*Young Canadian* 1891b). This advertisement reveals an awareness of the need to foster knowledge of the country's own history in young Canadians. The emphasis on what happened "before our country was what it is," demonstrates a desire to revisit the earliest stages of Canada's development, and see these as part of *Canadian*, rather than European, history. One of the criteria listed in *The Young Canadian*'s call for a new manuscript on Canadian history, is that it "must be from a Dominion and not a Provincial standpoint" (552). This further underscores the fact that what is termed "history" is subjective, depending on the viewpoint of the teller.

There is a desire here to provide an inclusive account of Canadian history. As Taylor observes, nineteenth-century historians sought to employ history as a means of achieving national accord:

> Canadian historians now demonstrated how struggle could be directed toward progress, and . . . show the way to the future. History was for them a continuum, and their first task was to provide a credible line of descent. But they were also to bring open discord to a close, to end the partisan, racial, and other divisions of the past, and to fashion a new, unifying identity. From a history of struggle they would forge a national consensus. (Taylor 1989: 152–153)

The history written for children in Anglophone Canada follows many of the patterns that Taylor sees in Canadian historiography of the period. *The Young Canadian*'s call for a new history textbook is further evidence of what Taylor identifies as a desire to use history to help build a sense of national unity by focusing on the whole country rather than on individual provinces.

These concerns, and the importance placed on producing educational history books for children, are further demonstrated by an editorial in the August, 1897 issue of the children's periodical *Home and Youth*. This discusses the completion of a book called the *Dominion School History* and cites its "introduction into the

public schools of all the provinces and territories of the Dominion, from the Atlantic to the Pacific" as an event of extreme national importance (*Home and Youth* 1). There is a clear desire here to emphasise Canadian identity and interests, rather than merely those of the individual provinces. The editorial goes on to say that "The study of the same history by all the school children of the Dominion . . . will undoubtedly have the effect of strengthening Canadian sentiment" (1). The account given of the work that went into producing the *Dominion School History* further shows that the book's aim was to construct a national history, rather than to focus on items that were "purely provincial" in interest (2). Such statements reflect a desire to strengthen the union of provinces and the hope that teaching national history would help achieve a sense of unity and a shared identity.

A strong centralist perspective dominated Canadian literature in 1897 and while this editorial claims that the new children's history text will address this problem by presenting a national view, the person chosen to write this book of history was in fact one W.H.P. Clement of Toronto, Ontario. The editorial also announces that the book's joint publishers will be Copp Clarke and William Briggs of Toronto, further illustrating the continuing struggle to present a non-centralist view of the nation. While the editorial does not remark on the possibility that the choice of publisher and author might demonstrate a bias in favour of Ontario, it does note that not all the necessary efforts were made to ensure the participation of the Francophone population in adopting this important text:

> The history must be translated into French and adopted by the French-Canadian schools of Quebec province. . . . Nothing seems to have been done in this direction as yet, although prominent French-Canadian educationists declared themselves as strongly in favor of such a national history. . . . It seems a great pity that a French translation of the history was not provided for before arrangements were made for the publication of the book. English and French editions should have been ready for the school children at the same time. (*Home and Youth* 1897c: 3)

The concern expressed here reflects a desire to solidify national sentiment and strengthen the sense of national unity in Canadian children. This is in keeping with the "central tenet of National historiography that . . . real statesmanship was the ability to harmonize, to accept a pragmatic compromise rather than indulge in rigid adherence to principle" (Taylor 1989: 231). The emphasis placed on providing children with a book of history that could speak for all elements of the country is part of this recognition of the need for harmony and compromise within Canada.

Despite the allegation in the September 23, 1891 edition of *The Young Canadian* that "we have no History of our country for our young Canadians" and the attention paid to the new *Dominion School History* of 1897, there were

other, earlier books of history for children produced in Canada during the nineteenth century, one of which was Henry H. Miles' *The Child's History of Canada*. Published in Montreal in 1870, this was the third number in the "New Series of Histories of Canada," and according to the title page it was designed for "the use of the Elementary Schools and of the young reader" (Miles 1870). Miles' work touches briefly upon a selection of 'key' historical events, from the time of Cartier, through the eighteenth-century expulsion of the Acadians and the victory of Wolfe at Quebec, to the defeat of the Americans in the War of 1812 and the events of 1867.

Miles' work reveals the difficulty that lies in reconciling the harsh reality of past events with idealised notions of both the nation's history, and its promise for the future. For example, in his discussion of Jacques Cartier, Miles presents the French explorer as a great man and glosses over the fact that he kidnapped several Indians and transported them back to France; "Cartier then sailed away with his captives. We cannot praise Cartier for this action, although his intention was good, and although the like was often done in those days" (Miles 1870: 2). While admitting that Cartier's actions were not praiseworthy, Miles tries to preserve the image of Cartier as a Canadian hero, excusing this act by claiming that his intentions were noble and that he acted no differently from many other men in his position. Evidently, Miles is struggling to square some ugly truths with his vision of what a Canadian hero should represent.

In addition to the difficulty of reconciling unpleasant facts of Canada's past, nineteenth-century historians also struggled to present a "national" history, rather than one that demonstrated a provincial or ethnic bias. Miles manages to achieve this to a certain extent by presenting important French historical figures as Canadian heroes, as is evident when he claims that "every lover of Canada thinks with pride and pleasure of Samuel de Champlain" (Miles 1870: 23). Indeed, a large portion of this text is devoted to the days of the French regime. Yet Miles later betrays the continuing existence of a "French *vs.* English" mindset in his discussion of the exile of the Acadians, the descendants of early French colonists in the Maritimes. England and France fought for control of Acadia during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with both sides demanding loyalty from the Acadians. After the region fell to England's control the British continued to fear that Acadian loyalty lay with France, and beginning in 1755 they expelled thousands of Acadians from the region (Morton 2001: 63–64). While acknowledging the "very sad nature" of these events (Miles 1870: 90), Miles betrays a continuing division between French and English interests by raising doubts about the accuracy of other historical accounts of the events. He writes; "Some French writers declare that no less than 7000 Acadians were removed to New England. There is, however, good reason for believing that the true number was between three and four thousand" (Miles 1870: 91). Miles here acknowledges the inherent unreliability in historical accounts, as well as the division in thought that continued between French and Anglophone Canada in the late nineteenth century.

In spite of these glimpses of discord, Miles' version of Canadian history strives to present a picture of a unified country that shares common hopes for the nation's future. He acknowledges the differences that once existed between the French and the English, but pinpoints a precise moment at which he believes reconciliation occurred:

> In June 1792, when a member was being chosen for the county of Quebec, there was almost a riot. . . . Prince Edward being there, tried to quiet the people by a speech, in which he said "let me no more hear the hateful talk about *French* and *English*. You are, all of you equally, the well beloved *Canadian* subjects of the king." These words were followed by cheers from the people, no longer on bad terms with each other. (Miles 1870: 115)

The idea of such a sudden reconciliation begs the question of how much of this history is based on fact, and how much of it is the author's own invention. It betrays a tendency to idealise the past, and by extension, the realities of the present. In this particular episode, the writer acknowledges the political tensions that existed yet tries to downplay them and to emphasise a positive outcome. As Taylor observes of Canadian historians: "In the light of later achievements, early disappointments . . . were regarded as the natural and unavoidable consequences of pioneer life" (Taylor 1989: 267). In the case of Miles' history, these tensions are to some degree seen as a natural part of Canada's early struggle on its road to nationhood. Yet in the processes of recognising the existence of such problems in the past, Miles actually admits their existence in his own time. Nevertheless, his attempt to downplay these political tensions is in keeping with a larger trend in the children's historical literature of the period: namely, the attempt by writers to acknowledge a developing sense of a unified Canadian "we," and to project this burgeoning, yet still fragile, national unity back onto the past.

The year 1893 saw the publication of Agnes Machar and T.G. Marquis' *Stories from Canadian History Based Upon "Stories of New France."* This book touches on many of the same figures and events as Miles' history of 1870 and further demonstrates the ongoing incorporation of the history of French Canada under the umbrella of "Canadian" history. Machar (1837–1927) was a Canadian-born poet and novelist for children and adults alike, and a popular contributor to Canadian, British, and American magazines, whose writing was expressly concerned with Canadian subject matter (Blenkhorn 2002). The fact that Machar is a co-author reveals that there is some proximity between historical fact and fiction in this book. Historiographer Ann Rigney acknowledges that historians "exercise some 'authorial action' in producing historical works" and argues that the historian gives the record of the past its narrative form (Rigney 1996: 35). This is key to understanding the "story-telling" that was occurring among historians and fiction-writers for children in Canada in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The narrativisation of past events was an integral means of instilling an awareness of the nation's history in Canada's young readers, a

fact demonstrated by Agnes Machar's role as a contributor to Marquis' history textbook.

The titles given to each chapter of Marquis' textbook also demonstrate a tendency to create a new Canadian mythology out of this history. Chapter VI, for instance, tells the history of Daulac des Ormeaux and is entitled "A Canadian Thermopylae." Adam Dollard Des Ormeaux was a French Catholic and a soldier who, in 1660, gathered with a group of Frenchmen, Hurons, and Algonquins at the foot of Long Sault rapids on the Ottawa River to fight off an attack by several hundred Iroquois (Moogk 1988). After a more than week-long siege of their enclosure, the defenders were overwhelmed by the Iroquois, but the tale lived on in many forms as a story of the brave defence of New France (Moogk 1988).[2] In choosing the title "A Canadian Thermopylae" for this particular version of the story, Marquis attempts to place Canadian history in the context of world history, acknowledging a desire to achieve a sense of a long-standing national heritage. In 480 BC, Thermopylae was the sight of a battle between the Greeks and the Persians led by Xerxes in which the Greeks struggled to defend themselves against the invaders. While the Greeks were ultimately unsuccessful, the story of Thermopylae grew into a legend of Greek gallantry in the face of an enemy (Burn 1982: 181). By choosing to compare the two incidents (one from ancient Greece and one from pre-Confederation Canada), Marquis draws a clear comparison between Canada's history and that of the ancient world.

Chapter XI of Marquis' work again demonstrates an attempt to establish Canadian history along the same lines as that of older nations, and to create a new national folklore. This chapter tells the tale of Madeleine Verchères (1678–1747), a popular subject for Canadian writers, and is entitled the "Heroine of Castle Dangerous." Verchères, the daughter of an officer and Quebec seigneur, was made famous by the story of her defence of the family fort against raiding Iroquois when she was just fourteen years of age. The title of this chapter reads more like that of a novel than a work of non-fiction, suggesting that some blurring of fact and fancy is taking place. The description of Verchères as a heroine is a further attempt to make Canadian history both palatable to young readers, and a source of national pride. Writers searched Canada's past to build a new register of national heroes and heroines.

The story of Quebec's Madeleine Verchères is one example of the way in which children's writers were situating their examination of the history of specific regions and locales in the context of the nation as a whole. Because Canada developed in stages, with Newfoundland being the last province to join Confederation in 1949, Canadian "national" history at the end of the nineteenth century still tended largely towards the history of Ontario and Quebec. Yet there was an ever-increasing effort to examine the past in a broader context, with the result that books of local history from Ontario and elsewhere do reflect a sense of national history.

In addition to the textbooks of historians like Marquis and Miles, which attempt to provide an overview of national history, there were other works of

historical non-fiction aimed at children. One example is a booklet by Jean Earle Geeson, published in Toronto in 1906. *The Old Fort at Toronto 1793–1906* gives a brief history of what is now "Fort York" in Toronto, including details of the American attack on it in 1813. In addition to providing an account of the physical structure itself, Geeson outlines the national importance of the fort, claiming it is "a spot second to no other in Canada in tragic interest," due to its role in the War of 1812 (Geeson 1906: 5). Geeson sees the events of this war as a source of pride for the nation:

> Canadians have every reason to be proud of the brave defenders of York, for the struggle for its keeping lasted eight hours, and was mainly carried on by our militia. Bodies have from time to time been dug up along the fighting line . . . showing how stoutly each step was disputed. (Geeson 1906: 9)

Geeson does not view the War of 1812 as a battle between American and British forces, but as an early example of a Canadian victory against a foe. Furthermore, the battle at Fort York is not merely seen as a part of Ontario's past, but as an event of national importance.

Geeson shows readers the important role that Toronto's local history plays in that of the nation as a whole, and argues that this history needs to be preserved and acknowledged:

> May the city which traces its earliest history to this spot treasure it as a monument of the past, and may the Government which it so nobly struggled to uphold, so protect and restore it that future generations may see from what small beginnings this great and glorious country has grown. (Geeson 1906: 16)

Geeson again emphasises the relation between the past, and the future, which is evident in many historical narratives for children from this time. For Geeson, there is glory in events from Canada's past, but there is also pride in rising from humble beginnings, and acknowledging the struggle that went into creating the nation.

The significance of these humble beginnings is emphasised in *Pen Pictures of Early Pioneer Life in Upper Canada*, published in Toronto in 1905 by William Briggs. With a title page that claims the work was written by "A 'Canuck' (of the Fifth Generation)," this book gives an account of the lifestyle and habits of the settlers of Upper Canada. The author's reference to his status as a "Fifth Generation" Canadian demonstrates that this historian takes pride in his Canadian heritage, and has a sense of identity that is rooted in Canada's past. M. Brook Taylor argues that following Confederation, historians expressed a new sense of being "wedded to place," and a loyalty to "the colonial land of their birth" that brought the responsibility of describing their home with accuracy

(Taylor 1989: 267). The author of *Pen Pictures* conveys this sense of loyalty, and the book's Dedication expresses a desire to instil a feeling of personal connection to the land and its past in the child reader; "To the Boys and Girls of Canada, and especially to those boys and girls, old and young, who are descendants of the early pioneers, this book is respectfully dedicated" ("Canuck" 1905: title page). In singling out the descendants of early pioneers, this passage also suggests that the author places those who can trace their roots back to the first settlers in a position of privilege. The past takes on a new personal significance when one can boast such a direct connection to the history of the early people of Canada.

The sense of being Canadian "by blood" emerges, and the book's introduction outlines the significance of being able to locate oneself in the history of the nation:

> The book . . . is the author's humble contribution to the history of the early days of his native province. Access to old manuscripts and records of family events retained in both his father's and mother's families for a century and more, has helped him . . . in carrying out the design which he had in view when he first commenced what, to him, was a labor of love. ("Canuck" 1905: Introduction)

The personal relationship this author has with Canada's past is noticeably different from the tone of the books by Miles and Marquis. "Canuck"'s evident satisfaction in his status as a fifth generation Canadian illustrates a very individual sense of pride in being Canadian, and particularly in being of Loyalist stock. Following the end of the American Revolutionary War in 1783, tens of thousands of people who had remained loyal to Britain during the conflict moved north from the United States to settle in the remaining British colonies. While their motivation ranged from political idealism to the tempting offer of free farmland (Morton 2001: 34–35), the story of the Loyalists endured as a symbol of Canadian fidelity and a rejection of American values. Many came to see these Loyalists as a form of Canadian nobility, and their place in Canadian history is the subject of much nineteenth-century writing.

In the collection "*Raise the Flag*," a poem by the Rev. Le Roy Hooker provides an example of the way in which some writers shared the history of the Loyalists with Canadian children. Although imbued with a strong sense of loyalty to Britain, Hooker's poem ultimately reveals the importance of these events to Canada itself and the first stanza suggests that the story has been passed down through the generations:

> In the brave old Revolution days,
> So by our sires 'tis told,
> King's-men and Rebels, all ablaze
> With wrath and wrong,
> Strove hard and long:

And, fearsome to behold,
O'er town and wilderness afar,
O'er quaking land and sea and air,
All dark and stern the cloud of war
In bursting thunder rolled. (Hooker 1891: 31)

After describing the victory of the Americans, the poet goes on to describe the thoughts of the defeated Loyalists, and the reasons behind their decision to leave their homes for Canadian soil:

What did they then, those loyal men,
When Britain's cause was lost?
Did they consent,
And dwell content
Where Crown, and Law and Parliament
Were trampled in the dust?
. . .
They would not spurn the glorious old,
To grasp the gaudy new;
Of yesterday's rebellion born,
They held the upstart power in scorn-
To Britain they stood true. (Hooker 1891: 32)

The poem continues with a description of the sacrifice the Loyalists made by leaving their homes for a new life in the difficult wilderness of Canada. The poet demands that his readers not forget the sacrifices and loyalty of these early Canadians:

These be thy heroes, Canada!
These men of proof, whose test
Was in the fevered pulse of strife
When foeman thrusts at foeman's life;
. . .
Stern was the test,
. . .
That proved their blood best of the best.
And when for Canada you pray,
Implore kind Heaven
That, like a leaven,
The hero-blood which then was given
May quicken in her veins alway:—
That from those worthy sires may spring,
In number as the stars,

Strong-hearted sons, whose glorying
Shall be in Right,
. . .
So, like the sun, her honored name
Shall shine to latest years the same. (Hooker 1891: 33–34)

The poem closes by emphasising the blood ties between generations of Canadians, in the same way in which "Canuck" discusses his own personal ties to this earlier generation. It suggests that, through this blood relation, Canadians have become a distinct race; one that is connected to the British race, from which the poet hopes that "strong-hearted sons" of Canada may spring. Through his portrayal of the Loyalists as Canadian heroes, Hooker draws a direct connection between British ancestry and the nation's bright future.

Although Hooker demonstrates a great deal of pro-British sentiment, he focuses on the importance of the Loyalists to Canada itself. During the nineteenth century, when there was a strong desire to strengthen a sense of national unity, the story of the United Empire Loyalists was a natural choice for those wishing to inspire loyalty to Canadian ideals and Canadian national interests. While "A Canuck" draws on a personal connection to this group of settlers in *Pen Pictures of Early Pioneer Life in Upper Canada*, Hooker's poem is an example of the way in which the story of the Loyalists received treatment in historical fiction, and demonstrates the ways in which fact, fiction, and the author's imagination contribute to the making of history.

Historical Fiction

Though it is true that historical non-fiction contains a certain degree of invention, fiction allows for an even greater range of interpretation of past events and people. Authors can embellish their accounts of historical events through use of description, characterisation, and dialogue. Canada's past was a rich source of literary inspiration and some of the most popular subject matter for children's historical fiction was the early period of settlement and exploration, including the fur trade, the experiences of the early settlers, and the settlement of the West. In addition to these tales, a large amount of literature dealt with Canada's military history, from the fall of Quebec, to the War of 1812. These historical narratives offer a range of interpretations of the events of Canada's past. It was in this past that many of the seeds of the nineteenth century's growing notion of "Canadian" identity were found, and it was a past that was increasingly explored through children's fiction.

Many of these historical works of fiction centre on young protagonists and give children an active role in their country's history, while other tales aimed at a child readership revolve around adult characters. With subject matter ranging from the voyages of Jacques Cartier, to the invasions by the Americans, these works demonstrate that as the nineteenth century progressed writers in

Anglophone Canada were beginning to examine people and events of Canada's past, not just those from British history. The Preface of "*Raise the Flag" and Other Patriotic Canadian Songs and Poems*, published in Toronto in 1891, outlines the growing recognition of important national events:

> In February last a deputation consisting of a large number of influential men . . . waited upon the Minister of Education, to advocate the raising of a flag on the school houses on national anniversaries. . . . The *Empire* newspaper has also offered a large flag to the school in each county which produces the best essay on the subject of "Raising the Flag". As an encouragement to the children, who have written the best essays in each school . . . a few loyal Canadians have compiled . . . this little collection of Patriotic Songs and Poems, as the most appropriate remembrance to be given to the scholars who have written the best essays on these subjects. (Rose Publishing 1891: iii)

We are told that the "songs and poems selected . . . strike the keynote of Canadian history and sentiment" (iii). The preface also makes clear the object of the book, which is the "spreading among the children of our land those loyal and patriotic sentiments which animated our fathers and helped them to defend and hand down to us the rights and privileges which we now enjoy" (iv). This collection establishes the perceived link between teaching Canadian children their country's history, and fostering in them a sense of pride and loyalty. In this instance, fiction is the chosen mode of conveying this history.

Among the subjects discussed by the authors in this collection are Canada's military exploits, Indian life, and the early days of the fur trade. Also of interest are stories of the lives of the early settlers and in such tales, there is both a tendency to idealise this past, and an attempt to depict its difficulties. The period of early European settlement in Canada was one of much hardship as newcomers faced the difficulty of creating a life in a raw and undeveloped land. Stories about this period exhibit pride in the fact that Canada's nineteenth-century achievements are the result of hard work and dedication on the part of these early inhabitants. In the September, 1897 edition of *Home and Youth*, there is a short piece entitled "Early Days in Canada" by an author listed simply as H.M.H., which acknowledges the role of Canada's early inhabitants in developing the country:

> There are few, if any, of the present generation who can really appreciate the hardships endured by the early settlers, whose industry and enterprise have made Canada "blossom as the rose." The romance of the "back settlement" is still unwritten, but in that delightful book by Miss Lizars, "In the Days of the Canada Company," are recited many of the thrilling experiences of the brave pioneers who reclaimed the Huron tract from the wilderness. (H.M.H. 1897: 15)

The author goes on to describe an incident in Miss Lizars' book that depicts the harsh reality of Canada's early days. Kathleen Lizars (1863–1931) was a novelist and historian who was best know for the historical tales of life in Western Ontario that she wrote with her sister Robina (New 2002b: 673). H.M.H. quotes from Lizars' 1896 book that outlines the difficulties encountered by one pioneer woman and her family:[3]

> A night of terror, when her husband, with gun and watch-fires, kept a pack of wolves at bay, was one of the many adventures at The Corners. . . .
>
> Here in the succeeding years, by the light of a strip of cotton drawn to the edge of a saucer of lard, she patched garments torn in the bush and clearing, and rocked "the ten forest babies" which afterwards came to her. Here the little boy, carried so far in her arms, died, and five of the babies followed him. "But nothing daunted by poverty, death and unceasing hard work, she baked, knit, sewed . . . cut up her silk wedding gown into sun-bonnets, and saw her children capering about her in made-over relics of former days." A life of patient toil she led, duty faithfully performed, great hardships suffered. (H.M.H. 15)

This account of Canada's early days in *Home and Youth* describes some of the difficulties that settlers faced, and emphasises the hard work and sacrifice that was required for individuals, and the nation, to succeed.

While writers often acknowledged the difficulty of life in early Canada, they also saw the past as a time of adventure and opportunity. Writers saw in the harsh existence of the early settlers and fur-traders an abundant source of inspiration for tales of excitement and bravery. Their pens transformed the sometimes cruel Canadian past into a world of challenge and adventure. Writers such as Oxley, Young, Ballantyne, and Kingston transported the young reader of nineteenth-century Canada to this exciting past, developing particular ideas of masculinity in the process. Men from Canada's past were portrayed as enterprising, strong, and fearless, and represented an ideal of masculinity for boy readers to emulate. Canada's success, it was implied, was founded on the efforts of such brave men.

One such novel is *Snow-Shoes and Canoes; or, The Early Days of a Fur-Trader in the Hudson's Bay Territory* (1890) by W.H.G. Kingston. This tells the story of a group of fur traders in the area of the Red River during the early nineteenth century. Along with depictions of battles with Indians, hunting expeditions, and the joys and trials of canoeing and snow-shoeing, the novel looks to the past to project a vision of the future. After drawing a picture of life in the days of the fur-trade, Kingston concludes by presenting an image of Manitoba in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and muses on the promise it holds for the future:

> Though the Hudson's Bay Company still retain their trading-posts, the whole of this vast region now forms a part of the Canadian Dominion. A

> large city, with churches and buildings of all descriptions, has sprung up close to Fort Garry on the left bank of the Red River, called Winnipeg, which contains from fifteen to twenty thousand inhabitants. . . . Many of the lakes and rivers on which formerly birch bark canoes alone were to be seen, are now navigated by steamers . . . while a band of Government surveyors have for some years past been employed in ascertaining the best course for a railway, which running entirely through the British territory, will one day form a connexion between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. From the above account of the country, it will be seen how great is the change which has taken place since the events I have described in the preceding pages. I was then a mere lad; I am now a grey-headed man. It was then wild in the extreme. It is still wild enough to satisfy the most romantic; but it now contains many of the elements of civilisation, and affords every opportunity of success to hardy, industrious men desirous of forming a home for themselves and their families. (Kingston 1890: 335–336)

Kingston, while finding inspiration in tales of the past, sees those events as part of a chain of progress, leading to a bright future. While his novel focuses on the events of a past time when the narrator was "a mere lad," it concludes with this picture of post-Confederation Canada, whose growth and success were due to the events and efforts of the preceding years.

Other writers found inspiration in the nation's military history. From the English defeat of the French in 1759, to the battles of the War of 1812, Canada provided its share of military heroes. The interest in tales of warfare on the part of children's writers reflects the preoccupation with military achievement and concerns of Empire in this era. Poems and songs like "The Battle of Queenston Heights" address past conflicts, and children's novelists were also writing about past military exploits. Two novelists of the age who address the subject of the defeat of the French forces in North America are J.M. Oxley and E. Everett-Green. Everett-Green's *French and English: A Story of the Struggle in America*, tells this tale from the side of a group of men who volunteer to aid the English cause, and raises the question of how much of this historical tale was based on fact. For example, when the character Humphrey resolves to fight the French he reveals a clear bias:

> The old instinctive hatred of centuries between French and English, never really dead, now leaped to life in his breast. He had heard plenty of talk during his boyhood of France's boundless pretensions with regard to the great New World of the West, and how she sought, by the simple process of declaring territory to be hers, to extend her power over millions of miles of the untrodden plains and forests, which she could never hope to populate. (Everett-Green 1899: 24)

While the author is not afraid to criticise the English at times, commenting on their "internal jealousies, and . . . incompetent commanders" (108), the tale is clearly told from the perspective of the victors. Positive portrayals of French characters do occur in the book, but these figures themselves admit English superiority. For example, the English impress the young French girl Corinne who says, "I have been ashamed of my countrymen! I have felt that our foes are nobler than ourselves, and that God must surely arise and fight for them" (Everett-Green 1899: 136).

A great deal is made of the divisions between the French and the English at the time of the battle of Quebec, but the author also provides some insight into the reality of nineteenth-century Canada. To begin with, the respect accorded to certain French characters reflects the good relations one could expect among people who now share a common citizenship. Furthermore, despite the fierce loyalty to the English shown by many of the novel's characters, James Wolfe (based on the real British General who died while commanding the English forces at Quebec) muses on what he believes will be Canada's future independence from Britain:

> We shall never have a second Canada out there such as France has won—a country wholly dependent upon the one at home, looking always to her for government, help, care, money. No, no; the spirit of those who went forth from England was utterly different. They are English subjects still, but they want to rule themselves after their own way. They will never be helpless and dependent; they will be more like to shake our yoke from off their necks when they arrive at man's estate. But what matter if they do? We shall be brothers, even though the sea roll between them. The parent country has sent them forth, and must protect them till they are able to protect themselves. . . . After that we shall see. But for my part I prefer that struggling spirit of independence and desire after self-government. It can be carried too far; but it shows life, energy, youth, and strength. (Everett-Green 1899: 254–255)

Everett-Green here uses the character of General Wolfe to comment on the late-nineteenth century reality of Canada's relation to Great Britain.

The author essentially acknowledges the fact that Canada has separated from Britain, but uses this opportunity to reconcile separation with continued loyalty to the mother country. Wolfe sees the act of separation as evidence of the strength of English character and argues that independence is a sign of success and strength, and a result of the influence of English blood in Canada. He suggests that this is something the French Canadians alone could not have achieved. While ostensibly portraying the events of a much earlier time, Everett-Green's novel provides glimpses of the reality of post-Confederation Canada. As a British author, she uses this invented speech of Wolfe to see in Canadian independence evidence of an "English" spirit of "life, energy, youth,

and strength," thereby reconciling the notion of an independent Canada with one that is still connected to imperial Britain.

J.M. Oxley's novel *Fife and Drum at Louisbourg* of 1899 also deals with the defeat of the French. This time, the story is told from the perspective of twin boys from Boston nicknamed Prince and Pickle. These boys, who embark on the expedition to Louisbourg as part of the fife and drums corps, share some of the attitudes toward the French displayed in Everett-Green's novel. The boys "had been brought up to regard the French as the very essence of all that was hateful in humanity, and when the attack on Louisbourg was mooted, nobody in Massachusetts was more eager than they for its successful execution" (Oxley 1899: 90–91). Yet when Prince and Pickle begin to encounter these "hateful" Frenchmen, their attitude toward them becomes somewhat uncertain. They begin to feel a degree of sympathy with the French and Prince observes, "we must seem just as strange to them, and doubtless they take us to be the greatest rascals in the world" (141). Pickle also begins to see things from the French perspective after he finds himself imprisoned in the city:

> Pickle's heart was moved to sincere pity by the discomforts the unfortunate inhabitants of the beleaguered town had to endure. . . . Gladly would Pickle have lightened their misery had it been in his power. It was not against them the colonial forces were waging war, yet they had to suffer just as if they were responsible. (Oxley 1899: 261)

Oxley's novel, like Everett-Green's, leaves the reader with an uncertain hold on what the relations between the French and English were like in the past, informing the reader as much about the late nineteenth century as it does about the historic period in which the story is set.

These two particular novels, one by a Canadian and the other by an English woman, each reflect an ongoing attempt to reconcile the nation's two main linguistic groups. Notably, both works were published in 1899, a time when the country was largely divided over the issue of conscription for the war in South Africa. With Anglophone and Francophone conflict so apparent, the earlier period of warfare between these two groups may have seemed a logical subject for children's authors to choose. Rather than merely focusing on the issue of division, however, these historical fictions each construct a version of the past that can allow for the possibility of future reconciliation between French and English Canadians. Instead of simply reliving the battles of the past, such fiction offers some hope for a unified Canadian nation.

As these novels demonstrate, there was a great degree of interest in military themes expressed in the children's literature of the day. The various battles that took place between the French and English forces during the eighteenth century were popular topics for juvenile fiction with many songs, poems, and novels written about British leaders such as James Wolfe and important French figures such as General Montcalm. The more recent events of the War of 1812 were

also popular fare for writers of children's fiction. As loyalty to the Empire was still a strong force in post-Confederation Canada, tales of earlier victories of the "English" over their enemies in North America—be they French, American, or Indian—were designed in part to bolster pride in Canada's place within the British Empire. There were, however, also important lessons to be learned from these military tales about having pride in Canada itself.

In their study of the tradition of the War of 1812 narratives for children, S.R. MacGillivray and J. Lynes remark on Agnes Machar's *For King and Country* published in 1874. MacGillivray and Lynes claim that Machar's aim in relating the story of this period in Canada's past is to "inspire in a later generation of young Canadian hearts some sense of that fierce patriotism . . . that . . . animated those who defended Canada's integrity in the War of 1812" (MacGillivray and Lynes 1996: 7). Writers like Machar were reminding young readers of their nation's past to "suggest not just the progressive march toward a prosperous future, but also the price that must be paid to ensure that such a future is realized" (MacGillivray and Lynes 1996: 9). Such writers were constructing Canadian history with the aim of shaping a strong sense of national pride and loyalty in young readers following Confederation.

Although male figures such as Isaac Brock and James Wolfe earned an important status as Canadian heroes, there were also tales written about Canadian heroines. One woman who was elevated to the status of national heroine was Upper Canada's Laura Secord (1775–1868). Secord famously made a 30 km trek during the War of 1812 in order to warn the British officer James FitzGibbon that the Americans were planning to attack his position at Beaver Dams, information which she claimed to have overheard American officers discussing (McKenzie 1988). Some have speculated that FitzGibbon was already aware of these plans to attack, but regardless, two days after Secord made her journey, the American forces surrendered to FitzGibbon (McKenzie 1988). One Canadian author to celebrate this woman in verse was Charles Mair (1838–1927) whose poem "A Ballad for Brave Women" appeared in the children's poetry collection *"Raise the Flag" and Other Patriotic Canadian Songs and Poems* in 1891. Mair was a poet, a dramatist and a journalist who was deeply involved in promoting the cause of Canadian nationalism (New 2002c). His poem tells a romantic version of the story of Secord's efforts to guard Canada from American aggressors during the War of 1812, a defining moment in Canadian history:

> A story worth telling, our annals afford,
> 'Tis the wonderful journey of Laura Secord!
> Her poor crippled spouse hobbled home with the news
> That Boerstler was nigh! "Not a minute to lose,
> Not an instant," said Laura, "for stoppage or pause—
> I must hurry and warn our brave troops at Decaws."
> "What! You!" said her husband "to famish and tire!"
> "Yes, me!" said brave Laura, her bosom on fire. (Mair 1891: 27)

The poet continues with several verses describing Secord's difficult journey through the forest to warn the troops. By her "woman's devotion" the day is saved, and she is accorded her place in Canadian history (Mair 1891: 30). Mair uses the elevated language of epic poetry to relate the story of Laura Secord, lending a greater sense of romance and heroism to the tale.

Not only does Mair envision Secord as a Canadian champion, but he also intends her story to serve as inspiration for young Canadian girls:

> Ah! Faithful to death were our women of yore!
> Have they fled with the past to be heard of no more?
> No, no! Though this laurelled one sleeps in the grave,
> We have maidens as true, we have matrons as brave;
> And should Canada ever be forced to the test—
> To spend for our country the blood of her best!
> When her sons lift the linstock and brandish the sword,
> Her daughters will think of brave Laura Secord! (Mair 1891: 30)

Mair's poem demonstrates that Canada's military history was something seen to inspire national pride and loyalty in both young male and young female readers. While young boys were encouraged to prepare themselves for possible battle in order to secure the nation's future, young women were also taught that they could serve their nation by being brave and loyal.

Mair's story of Laura Secord demonstrates several functions of the construction of Canadian history for young readers. In addition to making the events of the distant past more accessible to young readers, historical fiction also helped to develop a new Canadian mythology. In her evaluation of the role of myth-making in the new world, Margaret E. Turner cites the views of another critic, Colin Partridge. Partridge sees new cultures as undertaking different steps to clarify their relationship with their new surroundings:

> One of these is making myth and metaphor, which he describes as the home-made legend through which later inhabitants will view the place's origin and development: as factual history is succeeded in general consciousness by poetic or mythic history, the new culture comes to shape people's perceptions of the past. (Turner 1995: 15–16)

This claim that new cultures make myth and metaphor is supported by Canadian children's literature from the latter part of the nineteenth century, in which authors were consciously constructing what Turner calls a "poetic or mythic history." From these works emerges a sense that Canada possesses its own list of heroes and heroines, and its own unique legends.

History and Fantasy

Beyond simply blending fact and fiction, the more creative interpretations of Canada's past also employed fantasy. While many works of historical fiction centred on young characters in an attempt to engage child readers, a few writers saw fantasy as another means of interesting a young audience in Canadian history. Fantasy fiction, however, is not a very common form of Canadian children's literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and scholars of Canadian literature have noted the country's relative lack of fantasy writing. In her study of nineteenth-century children's literature Sheila Egoff remarks that while the middle of the century saw a wealth of imaginative fiction by English writers such as Lewis Carroll, "Canadian writers stood aloof from this trend" (Egoff 1967: 244). "It is not surprising," writes Egoff "that outstanding books of fantasy were not written in Canada at this time. In fact, nothing of a richness comparable to the English productions occurred in *any* other country, least of all in a frontier society such as Canada" (244). Writing in 1882, Catharine Parr Traill claimed, "Fancy would starve for lack of marvellous food to keep her alive in the backwoods" (Ketterer 1992: 2). Despite such observations, there is evidence in the stories of the First Nations, and the folktales of French Canada (Ketterer 1992: 2), that some Canadians were writing fantasy.

Admittedly, it accounts for a small percentage, but there is some evidence that Anglophone children's literature did include elements of fantasy. William H. New has observed that: "Fantasy, an element in Canadian writing from the early days of the tale-tellers and map-makers, often appeared as documentary. Nineteenth-century animal stories, like the maps of beasts and dragons, posed as empirical truth" (New 2001: 269). One children's work that supports New's claim that fantasy can function as "documentary" is *A Wonder Web of Stories* by Margaret Charlton and Caroline Fraser. This collection of stories demonstrates the use of traditional fantasy and fairy-tale elements. Published in Montreal in 1892, it contains a story by Margaret Charlton entitled "Captain Pepper, The Valiant Knight of the Laurentians." In many ways, this story is similar to Rudyard Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*, written nearly fifteen years after Charlton's tale. The two works make similar use of fantasy to explore national history. While Kipling reworks the myths and legends of England's past, Charlton's inventive tale is concerned with Canada's history. It tells the story of a boy named Fred who, while reading his book of geography and history in his garden, becomes frustrated with his lesson and decides that Quebec's Laurentian Mountains, the subject of his studies, are of no consequence. Upon declaring this, Fred is greeted by an irate little elf, who is disgusted by the boy's ignorance:

> "Bother the Laurentian Mountains!" cried the boy, getting up from the bench and throwing himself down on the grass. "Here I have been studying about them all the afternoon, and I cannot remember on which

> side of the St. Lawrence they are. . . . I am not going to think about them any longer; they are not of much consequence, anyway;" and settling himself into a comfortable position, Fred closed his eyes and fell asleep. He had not slept long, when he was suddenly awakened by a shrill voice saying:
>
> "Of not much consequence are they! that shows what a dunce you are! You stupid boy!"
>
> Quickly raising his head, Fred looked wonderingly about him to see who was speaking, and what did he see standing by his side but a queer little figure dressed in green, with a three-cornered scarlet hat perched on his head.
>
> "You ought to be ashamed of yourself to be such a dunce," again shrieked the little man. . . . No consequence, indeed! I would have you know, stupid boy, that they contain some of the oldest rocks in the world, and have been visited and written about by some of the most eminent men of the age. (Charlton and Fraser 1892: 106–8)

The little sprite (Captain Pepper as it turns out) is angry that Fred is ignorant of his country's history. In order to educate the boy a group of elves carry him off to the Laurentians where, very much in the spirit of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, he encounters many strange sights and figures.

At one point during these adventures, Fred meets a talking owl who helps show that the boy is not as ignorant of Canadian history as he first appears:

> Then, to Fred's astonishment, he made out that the owl was saying: "Jacques Cartier, John Cabot, Sebastian Cabot, Champlain. No, Columbus; yes, that is the name: Columbus—Christopher Columbus—it was who came over in three ships."
>
> "Oh, you are all wrong!" exclaimed Fred, unable to keep quiet any longer. "It was Cartier who came over in three ships."
>
> "No such thing; do you mean to tell me he could separate himself into three parts. Oh, you clever boy! You wise boy! Did you take the prize in history in your class?"
>
> "No, I did not," said Fred, getting angry at the bird's tone; "but I know it was Cartier who came over in three ships. . . ."
>
> "I tell you what, my boy," cried the owl . . . "never again attempt to correct any of us. An owl, you know, is the bird of wisdom."
>
> "I think you are a very stupid bird, for all you look so wise," answered Fred. (Charlton and Fraser 1892: 122–123)

Fred's encounter with this bird demonstrates that he does actually know something about his country, and over the course of his adventures his understanding of Canadian history grows and develops as he encounters the various spirits of the place.

The figure that ultimately helps Fred to understand Canada is the fairy Dew-Drop, Queen of the Air, who takes the boy on a flight to see those parts of the country of which he is ignorant:

> "You know but little of the country in which you live, my boy," said Dew-Drop, turning to Fred.
>
> "Yes, dear lady," answered Fred. "I have not seen much of it."
>
> "Then you shall see it now, you shall feast your eyes upon its beauties."
>
> "Is it, then, so beautiful?" asked Fred, wonderingly. The Queen of the Air smiled as she answered, "Wait and see." (Charlton and Fraser 1892: 134–5)

After seeing the riches of the country from coast to coast, Dew-Drop takes Fred across the ocean to what she tells him is, "the home of the mighty nation you have sprung from" (136). Here, with a "long, lingering look at the noble face" he gazes upon Queen Victoria (137), whom he recognises from her portrait that his family has. Upon his return home, Fred expresses his pleasure at all that he has seen:

> "I shall never, never forget what I have seen. And my country, I shall love it now as I never loved it before, it is so grand, so beautiful, so vast. Oh, I could die for it!" cried Fred, his face aglow with excitement. "And I am so glad we belong to that gracious lady we have seen." (137–138)

Charlton's story, with its stress on both Canada's beauties and England's greatness, presents a vision of the nation that includes pride in Empire. In this instance, the importance of England's role in Canada's history is emphasised.

Dew-Drop is pleased with Fred's positive response to all that he witnesses, and the tale, which begins with the boy's study of Canadian history, ends with the fairy's vision of its future:

> "Once more I rejoice. Greed and gain will yet be over-reached and conquered by the clarion tones of patriotism. 'Down with all treason towards our beloved country' shall be heard ringing throughout the land, and he, who for so long manfully strove for the glory of his country, will hear and rejoice. Oh, youth, remember that should the time ever come when thy country shall need a strong arm to defend her rights, see to it that thine is uplifted in her defence." (138)

Charlton's work begins with a lesson in history, but finishes by imparting this message to the contemporary child reader about the promise of the nation's future. Charlton's story contains many whimsical elements in the style of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, including a comical King and Queen, a strange wedding party and an absurd court case. Charlton employs these elements of

fantasy in the serious cause of fostering an understanding of national history and national identity which she believes includes pride in Canada's role in the Empire. While many nineteenth-century children's writers were writing more realistic historical fiction, Charlton's tale is one example of the use of fantasy to engage the reader in the subjects of Canadian geography, politics, and history, and to inspire a sense of pride and national identity.

While Charlton's tale is one of the relatively rare works of fantasy that explores the question of Canadian identity, there is another worth considering. This is the popular series of "Brownies" stories by author Palmer Cox (1840–1924). Though Palmer Cox spent much of his career in the United States, moving first to California in 1863 and then to New York in 1875, where he published his first collection of Brownie stories, he was born and raised in Granby, Quebec and returned there permanently in 1905. Cox wrote and illustrated a highly popular series of children's tales about mischievous little sprites named Brownies, inspired by Scottish legends about household spirits of the same name. Cox wrote dozens of stories about these funny little creatures and in 1894, a collection entitled *The Brownies Around the World* was published in New York. The first story in this collection is entitled "The Brownies in Canada." Cox lends particular importance to the Canadian scene by making Canada the initial stage of the Brownies' first journey outside the United States. At eighteen pages, it is also the longest of the tales in this collection, with the others being somewhere between five and ten in length (Margerum 2002). The first page of the tale includes a picture of the Canadian Brownie whose costume represents what Cox saw as some of the recognisable elements of the Canadian identity. Dressed in the heavy overcoat and wide sash that marked the familiar costume of the old *courier du bois*, the Brownie's outfit is completed by a toque and a pair of snowshoes. He also carries a flag on which is emblazoned a lacrosse stick and ball, representing Canada's national sport. Through his illustration of the Brownie, Palmer Cox encompasses the figure of the "Canadian" in a succinct visual image.

In addition to the illustrations, which include such Canadian scenes as the Bank of Montreal building and the St. Lawrence River, Palmer Cox uses his verse to describe contemporary Canada, including its cities:

Then London, Galt, and Kingston old,
In turn received the Brownies bold.
To Ottawa went all the band
To view each edifice so grand,
To Hamilton, to Goderich, too,
That overlooks Lake Huron blue,
The Brownies took a hasty run
For observation and for fun.
Through streets that are Toronto's pride
They hurried on with hasty stride,
Viewed banks, and buildings made to hold

The money which is good as gold.
Looked through each handsome court and square,
And market-place with special care. (Cox 1894: 5–6)

While drawing an attractive picture of Canada's growing cities, Cox also includes many lessons in Canadian history. The Brownie stories were very popular in the United States and this tale includes an account of Canada's former struggles with the Americans:

Once while they halted to survey
A steep and grass-grown mound of clay,
Said one, "This marks an old redoubt
Where once the British kept lookout,
When Uncle Sam and Johnny Bull
Had their last interesting pull,
Or tug of war, as records show,
Now over eighty years ago." (Cox 1894: 6)

Cox is here referring to the War of 1812, but he stops short of taking a stand on this "tug of war" over Canada between the United States and Great Britain.

On other historical matters, however, the narrator expresses a stronger opinion. As the Brownies view the beauties of the St. Lawrence and the Thousand Islands, he speculates on the history of the Indians and their struggle to maintain their land in the face of new settlers:

No wonder Indians strewed, like stones,
Along its banks the settlers' bones,
Before they'd leave a scene so fair
And turn to seek a home elsewhere.
The arm indeed might well be strong,
The hatchet heavy, arrow long,
And scalping-knife be ever keen
Defending such a lovely scene. (Cox 1894: 7)

In this short verse, though it includes some violent imagery, Cox offers a sympathetic perspective on the history of the Canadian Indians, in contrast to many of the portrayals of settler–Indian conflict by other writers.

The author's interest in Canadian history does not end here. When the Brownies reach Quebec, complete with a stop in Granby, "The birthplace of the Brownie man" (Cox 1894: 14), they make their way to Quebec City. In this episode Cox devotes a lengthy verse to explaining the events that led to the British victory in North America:

Said one, who paused to look around:
"My friends, we tread historic ground;

'Twas up this path, so rough and steep,
The British did at midnight creep,
With guns unloaded in their hands,
Obedient to the strict commands,
For fear an accidental shot
Might bring the Frenchmen to the spot.
Full in the van, with bated breath,
Brave Wolfe ascended to his death,
While Montcalm, trusting guards to keep
A careful watch, took his last sleep!
For lo! the early dawn revealed
The red coats stationed in the field;
The Plains of Abraham were bright
With troops all marshalled for the fight.
I will not here the tale intrude
About the battle that ensued
Of rallying ranks, when hope was low,
Or brilliant charges to and fro.
On history's pages read you may
How fell the heroes of that day;
And how, ere shades of night came down,
The Union Jack waved o'er the town." (Cox 1894: 16–17)

The events Cox chooses to describe in his tale, including the battle of the Plains of Abraham and the War of 1812, are events that were important not just to Canada, but to Great Britain and the United States as well. It is a national history of global significance that the author shares with his young readership.

Cox's work of fantasy helps in many ways to shape an image of Canada and includes many familiar clichés and representations of Canada popular in the nineteenth century. It is fitting, therefore, that this story closes with the familiar image of Canada as a land of the frozen north, as the Brownies engage in a snowshoe race:

While through the Canadian wilds they passed
Where snow was piled like mountains vast,
They took to snow-shoes long and stout,
With their own hands well fashioned out;
. . .
So every Brownie struggled well
His puffing comrades to excel;
But shoes would sometimes hit or hitch,
And headlong down the mountain pitch

The very ones that seemed to show
The greatest speed upon the snow.
. . .
But best of feelings governed still
The lively race o'er plain and hill. (Cox 1894: 17–18)

Palmer's whimsical tale about the Brownies' adventure in Canada is, like Margaret Charlton's tale, a rare example of the ways in which writers employed fantasy, fact, and fiction to create a particular version of Canadian history, and contribute to the sense of what it meant to be Canadian in the process. Works of fantasy and historical narratives such as these show that by the turn of the twentieth century, there was a growing awareness of the need to celebrate Canadian achievement. As Palmer Cox's reference to figures such as James Wolfe indicate, Canada was developing its own list of heroes who were being taken from different periods of its history.

Heroic Days of Yore

While Charlton and Cox demonstrate the ways in which fantasy helped shape a sense of past achievement, other works for children attained this by different means. Marquis' comparison of the story of Daulac des Ormeaux to the battle of Thermopylae in a history textbook is one example of how writers were fashioning Canadian history in the tradition of epic poetry and classical mythology. Another work that provides a different example of the ways in which Canada was beginning to form its own mythology and create its own list of heroes, is a poem by William Thomas White published in the "*Raise the Flag*" collection of poetry for children. In "The Battle of Queenston Heights," White places Isaac Brock in the same league as some of the great heroes of the classical age:

Bring forth the book of heroes' deeds, and to your listening flock,
Read reverently of Queenston Heights and the death of Isaac Brock.

Oh, there are some amongst us who spurn the patriot's name,
Who say our country has no past, no heroes known to fame.

They talk of bold Leonidas who held the pass of blood,
And how Horatius Cocles braved swollen Tiber's flood.

They never tire of dark Cortez who spared nor blood nor tears,
Nor yet of Arnold Winkelreid, who broke the Austrian spears.

Their glory is of Waterloo, that crimson-memoried fight,
Of the "thin red line" at Inkerman and Alma's bloody height.

For Canada their voice is mute, yet history's pages tell
That braver blood was never spilt than where her heroes fell.
(White 1891: 17–18)

By invoking the names of historically significant people like Cortez and battles such as Waterloo, White places Canadian events and personages on the same level of importance and influence as these world-famous figures. The poet continues by describing the battle with the Americans who appear at first to be gaining the victory. Brock, however, manages to turn the tide:

What spell so much could nerve them in that losing battle's shock,
"Courage, boys! It is the General! Onward comrades! On with Brock!"

Now forward to the battery! They lend a ready ear;
There's a hero's form to lead them and a hero's voice to cheer.

And o'er the level plain they press, and up the sloping hill,
'Mid hiss of shot and volleys' smoke his cry is "Onward!" still.

And now they pass the low ravine, they clamber o'er the wall;
The fatal death-shot strikes him; they see their leader fall.

"Push on, push on, York volunteers!" brave words—they were his last,
And like the vision of a dream the charging column passed.

. . .

One spirit moved, one thought inspired that gallant little band,
That foot of no invading foe should e'er pollute their land.
(White 1891: 19–20)

White employs the language of the epic poem to add grandeur, excitement, and suspense to this account of the combat, and to impress upon the reader the comradeship and unity of the "gallant little band" of soldiers willing to die to defend Canadian soil. The poet then shifts the narrative from the report of this past battle, to his vision of the nation's future; a future in which Canadians will speak of Brock as a great hero:

And thou, whose sacred dust entombed on yonder summit lies,
Beneath that noble monument far-reaching toward the skies,

Thy name shall be a holy word, a trumpet-note to all,
When bravery's arm is needed and they hear their country's call.

And future sires shall take their sons at evening on their knee,
And tell the old tale over, and thus shall speak of thee—

"His is the noblest name we have in all our bright array;
He taught our youth to falter no tho' death might bar the way;

"He showed our might, he led our arms, he conquered, tho' he fell;
He gave up all he had—his life—for the land he loved so well."
(White 1891: 20)

Through the poet's image of both the past and the future, the British-born Isaac Brock becomes one of Canada's most famous champions. With a blend of invention and omission, the poet renders Brock, who did not come to Canada until 1802, as an archetypal Canadian hero.

In the same way that verse transforms Isaac Brock from a historical figure to an almost mythological hero, Madeleine Verchères (to whom Miles devotes a chapter in his history textbook) also becomes the subject of poetry in the nineteenth century. In part because she was a young girl during the events that made her famous, Madeleine Verchères was a popular figure in children's literature and W.H. Drummond clearly addresses a child audience at his poem's opening. The poem begins with a colourful vision of old Quebec:

I've told you many a tale, my child, of the
old heroic days,
Of Indian wars and massacre, of villages ablaze
With savage torch, from Ville Marie to the
Mission of Trois Rivieres;
But never have I told you yet of Madeleine
Vercheres. (Drummond 1898: 6)

In Drummond's version of Verchères' history, the people of the land are gathering their autumn harvest in a peaceful, pastoral scene, unaware of the danger that surrounds them:

For news there was none of battle, from the
forts of the Richelieu
To the gates of the ancient city, where the flag
of King Louis flew;
All peaceful the skies hung over the seigneurie
of Vercheres,
Like the calm that so often cometh ere the
hurricane rends the air. (Drummond 1898: 7)

The poet's talk of the "ancient city" lends an air of significance and majesty to the Canadian scene, to which the word "ancient" is not commonly applied. This evokes the feeling that Canadian society is deeply rooted in the days of long-ago. As Madeleine Verchères bravely battles her Iroquois foe her story is cast in the style of great legends, and Nature itself seems to echo the enormity and significance of the events as they unfold:

And they say the black clouds gathered, and a
tempest swept the sky,
And the roar of the thunder mingled with the
forest tiger's cry,
But still the garrison fought on, while the light-
ning's jagged spear
Tore a hole in the night's dark curtain, and
showed them a foeman near. (Drummond 1898: 10)

Young Madeleine's brave defence of her father's property against the attack of the Iroquois is a valiant deed and she takes her place in the growing list of Canadian heroes and heroines.

Although he celebrates the existence of brave Canadians such as Madeleine Verchères, Drummond does not idealise the past. There is a clear sense that one should be thankful that such days are over:

And this, my dear, is the story of the maiden
Madeleine.
God grant that we in Canada may never see
again
Such cruel wars and massacre, in waking or in
dream,
As our fathers and mothers saw, my child, in
the days of the old régime! (Drummond 1898: 12)

The present, it is implied, is an age of progress that has been achieved by the efforts of early Canadians such as Verchères. Despite his assertion that they were "heroic days," Drummond concludes the poem with a clear notion that Canada's present is the hard-earned result of, and a great improvement on, its past. Drummond's poem provides further evidence that towards the beginning of the twentieth century, the nation was beginning to claim its own past, and to see in its history all the potential Canada held for the future.

Exploring national history became a key part of the process of developing national unity and identity. In tales from the past, writers found a source of literary inspiration, and the tools needed to construct a Canadian identity. Historical narratives taught children about their nation's past, and groomed them for their role as contributors to its future. While ostensibly learning the facts of the past, readers were actually reading different versions of Canadian history shaped by various points of view. Many writers thought that teaching history from a national perspective would create a sense of shared bonds, thereby ensuring that the new Dominion would not crumble, and minimising inter-provincial conflict. Among the various constructions of national history, the sense of Canada as "one nation housing one people inhabiting a common land," repeatedly manifests itself (Taylor 1989: 268). This historical literature for

children aims to reinforce a sense of harmony and common identity in the hopes of ensuring a successful future for the nation. Canadian society is often pictured in a condition of progress, with the past providing the seeds for present achievement and future prosperity. By helping children to understand the nation's history, writers attempted to provide a tool that their young readers could use to construct a future that fulfilled this vision of promise.