

The Dream of Empire: The Scottish Roots of English Studies in Canada

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THE LAST FIFTEEN years have seen the publication of a number of histories of English Studies in Canada which depart from earlier discussions by focusing on disciplinary formation rather than on the history of a specific institution (Tayler; Johnson; Murray; Hubert). This new orientation has brought to light some of the social undercurrents that propelled the formation of the discipline of English in the emerging society of nineteenth-century colonial Canada. Yet surprisingly, these disciplinary histories largely neglect the significant links between the rise of English Studies and the history of British imperialism that have recently been identified by scholars such as Gauri Viswanathan and Robert Crawford.

This limitation is best illustrated by the treatment of the Scottish legacy in the histories of the discipline. Most scholars of Canadian English Studies readily acknowledge the disproportionate impact of Scottish immigrants on the formation of Canadian universities, and especially on the growth of rhetoric and of modern languages departments. Some have in fact made the Scottish contribution the focus of their studies (Masters; Tayler). Such scholars call attention to the deep-rooted divisions between English Anglican and Scottish Presbyterian educators that patterned the Canadian educational system and determined the place of English Studies in that system, as the English emphasis on a classical curriculum came up against the more utilitarian Scottish approach. Yet these accounts fail to consider in any depth how a long and fraught history of Anglo-Scottish relations informed the Scottish immigrants' debate with English educators in Canada. In particular, they overlook

the ways in which the Scottish belletristic tradition and Scottish constructions of Britishness — both of which emerged in part as a response to the Union of 1707 — were uniquely suited to the Canadian environment in which the Scottish immigrants now found themselves. Indeed, the success of the Scottish model, not only in Canada but in other parts of the empire, and the consistency with which the discipline developed differently in metropole and colony are strong indicators of the imperial dynamics at work in the history of English Studies.

Katie Trumpener notes in her *Bardic Nationalism* that one of the byproducts of colonization was the constant circulation of ideas, customs, and ideologies that immigrants from one end of the empire (Scotland, Ireland) brought to other remote corners (India, Australia, Canada). Colonization engendered a “transcolonial” perceptual mode which was characterized by “connected perspectives and cultural cross-pollinations of different peripheries, and . . . the emergence of a transperipheral view that bypasse[d] or actively oppose[d] the empire’s nominal center” (245). Canadian English Studies came into being within just such a transcolonial cultural setting. By looking at its inception in Canada, and in particular at the Scottish contribution, we can link the Scottish immigrants’ twofold experience of English domination¹ to the institutionalization of rhetoric in the early and mid-nineteenth century. In addition, we can identify a second phase in the development of the discipline in which rhetoric was displaced by an Arnoldian and idealist study of literature, and during which Canadian English Studies diverged from the American institutionalization. While this second phase might on the surface appear to depart from the Scottish legacy, an analysis of the underlying anxieties of Victorian Canadians regarding national identity suggests it was in fact very much continuous with that legacy.

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Scottish immigrants had a disproportionate impact on the development of Canadian primary and secondary education, as well as on the genesis of the major English language universities of Eastern Canada: Dalhousie, McGill, Queen’s, and Toronto. Two nineteenth-century accounts attest to the predominance

of Scots in Canadian educational institutions. Peter Ross observed in *The Scot in North America* (1896) that "there is not a college or university in Canada, where at least one 'son of the heather' is not to be found in some capacity, and the entire educational system of the country, from the primary school to the university is more indebted to the Scottish section of the community than to any other" (McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence* 29). Likewise, W. J. Rattray's *The Scot in British North America* (1882) included a chapter on "The Scot in Professional Life: Universities and Colleges," which, he noted, was supposed to have surveyed "the entire teaching profession, but it was found that any such scheme would make the chapter far too long" (814). Scots in British North America not only served as teachers, but also as university administrators and government officials who oversaw the development of the educational system.² Finally, Scottish immigrants were actively involved in the publishing industry that produced classroom textbooks.³

Several factors account for the pervasive Scottish presence in Canadian educational institutions. First was the generally accepted view that Scottish teachers would work harder for less money. Bishop Strachan, a prominent nineteenth-century Scottish Canadian educator and organizer of colleges who arrived in Canada in 1799, cautioned against hiring Englishmen to staff a proposed college in Montreal:

I must further add on the subject of finding Professors, that Gentlemen newly from England and accustomed to the wealthy Universities of that country may not always possess the qualities necessary to make them useful in this projected Seminary. Learning they may have in abundance, but the industry, the labour (I may say drudgery) and accommodation to circumstances cannot be expected from them. (Letter to S. Sherwood, Andrew and James Stewart, Feb. 14, 1815, 68)

Equally important, the Scottish policy of open access to secondary education and the large number of good universities Scotland boasted had produced a surplus of highly skilled individuals who could not find work in Europe. The British colonies offered employment opportunities that were often unavailable in Britain itself.

The disproportionate number of Scots in Canada and in other parts of the empire was also the result of Scotland's late industrialization and modernization, which had displaced many agricultural workers and artisans from their traditional way of life. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Highland Clearances and a process of rapid urbanization produced a disrupted population that suffered from famine and unemployment, and whose access to land was very limited. These factors, combined with a tradition of Scots venturing abroad, ensured that between 1790 and 1845 Scots were statistically the most likely members of the British Isles to emigrate (Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada* 180; Devine 238). Scottish immigrants were highly successful at adapting to the Canadian climate and harsh material conditions, in part because of their still-fresh memories of the series of dislocations to which they had been subjected in Scotland.

Yet the impact of Scots on the development of Canadian education was not solely a function of their diligence or unwillingness to return to Europe, but more crucially was due to their exclusion from the elite Anglican-only schools established by the English colonists. In England, Anglican educational institutions had been closed to Catholics, Jews, Nonconformists, and Dissenters, who were not brought under the same roof until the founding of University College, London in 1828. This exclusionary practice was reproduced in Canada in the statutes of King's College, Nova Scotia (founded in 1789), which required students to sign the Thirty-Nine Articles before they could matriculate. The statutes further prohibited students from attending Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist or Methodist services, thereby effectively excluding the great majority of the province's population. English colonial administrators tended to believe that education was superfluous for a large sector of the population (an inferior class of people who would not have been educated in England in any case) and that its purpose was primarily to produce a leadership class. The indifference of colonial authorities is testified to by documents such as the Durham Report and by Strachan's "Report on Education" of 1815 (written during an earlier and less conservative phase of

his career). Strachan's "Report" exhibited a traditional Scottish emphasis on universal education, entreating the members of the legislature to provide for the education of the general population who could not afford to send their children to schools in England. Strachan complained that "nothing has been yet done to promote education among the poorer Inhabitants" and advanced numerous arguments why "the Education of Youth is a subject well worthy of the attention of the Legislature" (75).

On the English side, arguments both for expanding and for limiting the growth and accessibility of colleges were made on the basis of a perceived link between education and social control. After the American Revolution, recently arrived Loyalists feared that if broader access to education were not provided, Canadians would have to travel to the United States to study, where they would be exposed to subversive American views. The American Loyalist clergyman and immigrant to Nova Scotia, Charles Inglis, wrote in 1790 regarding King's College that

With respect to our seminary, one of my principal motives for pushing it forward was to prevent the importation of American Divines and American policies into the province. Unless we have a seminary here, the youth of Nova Scotia will be sent for their education to the Revolted Colonies — the inevitable consequence would be a corruption of their religious and political principles.

(Vroom 21)

Loyalists were thus among the first Anglicans to press for expanding the educational system.

Yet the Anglican elite worried that educating the general population would foster opposition to the Tory party, and continued to resist its expansion. Inglis had difficulty convincing the governors of King's College to proceed with plans for its development, and when they finally did so, he failed to persuade them to open the college's doors to non-Anglicans.

In the face of such indifference and religious restrictions, Scots had no choice but to establish their own schools and colleges, just as Dissenters had done in England a hundred and fifty years prior when religious tests had been instituted which kept them out of Oxford and Cambridge. In England, the dis-

senting academy tradition had been instrumental in reforming higher education, which it made more accessible and into which it introduced practical subjects of study, such as science and English.⁴ Scottish-Canadians played a comparable role in the reorganization of Canadian higher education. Like the Dissenters, Scottish immigrants opened up the educational system and reoriented the curriculum towards a more utilitarian end.

The Scottish immigrants naturally modelled the colleges they founded in Canada on those they had themselves attended in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. Pedagogical traditions imported from Scotland were further reinforced by the rigid exclusivity of Anglican colleges, as the history of Pictou Academy in Nova Scotia illustrates. The Glaswegian minister Thomas McCulloch (later president of Dalhousie University) founded the school in 1809 at the behest of members of the Scottish community who, as Presbyterians, were barred from King's College. In order to appease the authorities and to secure funding, McCulloch agreed not to grant degrees. Instead, students trained at Pictou subsequently went to Edinburgh or Glasgow to obtain their MA's, thereby cementing their ties to the Scottish system. Many Pictou graduates later went on to play key roles in the formation of Canadian educational institutions, and brought to these institutions the Scottish pedagogical values instilled in them at Pictou and in Scotland. For instance, William Dawson was the first Superintendent of Education in Nova Scotia, and subsequently president of McGill. George Munro Grant became president of Queen's, James Ross became president of Dalhousie when it reopened in 1863, and William Brydon Jack served as president of the University of New Brunswick.

Religious, cultural, and class divisions thus led directly to the proliferation of Canadian colleges.⁵ At the same time, they bolstered pedagogical traditions imported from Europe, for the religious divide between Scots and English was accompanied by significant methodological and curricular disputes. Unlike England, Scotland had a tradition of popular education dating back to the sixteenth century which derived from the Calvinist insistence that each individual ought to receive religious

instruction and be able to read the Bible. The widespread parish schools, which were closely tied to the universities and which constituted an early instance of a national educational system, produced the relatively high rates of literacy Scotland enjoyed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Devine 64).⁶ Scottish Enlightenment ideals of progress and improvement also contributed to Scottish support for a universally available educational system which would serve to modernize both the peasantry and Scotland itself. Scottish universities, which had low fees and no entrance exams, were both more numerous and less exclusive than their English counterparts. The Scottish system was thus an unusually democratic system which provided opportunities for social mobility, though the extent of this egalitarianism may have been exaggerated.⁷

In keeping with their traditional pedagogic emphasis on accessibility, the Scots had developed a lecture system which allowed a greater number of students to be taught at a lower cost. Strachan remarked that he "prefer[red] the form of the Scotch and German Universities to the English or rather a mixture of both plans because much more may be done at one fourth of the Expense" (68). The Scottish lecture system was particularly advantageous in Canada given the paucity of teachers and other resources. Accordingly Strachan, Bishop Inglis and other educators argued that the Oxbridge model was simply impractical for a "young country" such as Canada. In addition to the lecture system, Scottish Canadians also adopted the Scottish policy of open admission and non-sectarianism, as Lord Dalhousie's 1820 address attests: "This College of Halifax is founded for the instruction of youth. . . . It is formed in imitation of the University of Edinburgh: its doors will be open to...all who may be disposed to devote a small part of their time to study... It is founded upon the principles of religious toleration secured...by the laws" (Tayler 77). Similarly, Strachan called for the founding of "a University where the Arts & Sciences may be taught to the youth of all denominations" (76).

The curricular dispute between the Scots and the English was equally great. The Anglican colleges established in Canada stressed familiarity with the classics and with classical languages,

a familiarity which, as in England, was the mark of a gentleman (Hubert 23). By contrast, the Scottish-dominated colleges adopted a utilitarian curriculum that was felt to be better suited to the social and economic conditions of a new colony (and which consequently was popular in India, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States as well). The Scots broadened the curriculum in Canada as they had in Europe to include philosophy, science,⁸ and the study of vernacular languages. While in the Anglican colleges the study of rhetoric consisted primarily of reading and translating classical texts, the Scots placed great emphasis on elocution and composition in English. McCulloch's early nineteenth-century curriculum at Pictou Academy was a Scottish and therefore relatively broad one: Latin, Greek, logic, moral philosophy, mathematics, political economy, and rhetoric (Harris 33). McCulloch emphasized the study of English both at Pictou and then at Dalhousie. Likewise, Strachan's "Report on Education" recommended that district schools include "The Latin, French & English languages — Writing, Arithmetic, Geography & Practical Mathematics" in their curricula (76).

In the beginning years of Canadian secondary education, while Scots were lobbying for the inclusion of vernacular languages and literatures, Anglican colleges were much more resistant, bound as they were to the Oxford model. The 1837 populist uprisings intensified fears that education, particularly in the vernacular, would breed rebellion, and Anglican opposition to educational reforms deepened.⁹ Thus post-1837, the defense of the classical curriculum against the encroachment of vernacular studies took on greater urgency. Even when the necessity of providing education to the general population was accepted by the colonial authorities, English colonists continued to view the aim of education as the production of cultivated gentlemen, and accordingly adhered to a classical curriculum.

It is therefore no accident that the first professor hired expressly to teach English literature in Canada was an Edinburgh-trained Scot, Sir Daniel Wilson, who dominated the English department of the University of Toronto from his appointment to a chair in English literature and history in 1853 to his

promotion to President of University College in 1880. Calls for study of the English language invariably came from outside the Anglican establishment. As president of McGill University, William Dawson supported English Studies, which were taught there by a Scot named W. T. Leach. At the Scottish Presbyterian Queen's University, Edinburgh graduate John Clark Murray broadened the curriculum, giving it a utilitarian emphasis on rhetoric. Scottish Baptist James De Mille secured the place of rhetoric at Dalhousie. And most famously, Egerton Ryerson, president of the Methodist Victoria College (affiliated with Wesleyan College in the United States), made English Studies the centerpiece of his educational program. Most Canadian colleges had English programs well in place by the 1870s. By contrast, the Anglican Trinity College (Toronto) introduced English as an option only in 1884. Until the 1880s Trinity College resolutely followed the traditional Oxford classics-based model.

Thus where the Scottish model was democratic, non-sectarian and utilitarian, the English model was elitist, exclusively Anglican, and classical. Unlike the English, Scots were concerned with the practical applications of education to life in the colonies. It was on this basis that in 1838 McCulloch argued against an exclusive focus on classics:

... that boys should in Halifax or elsewhere spend six or seven years upon Latin and Greek and then four more in college partly occupied with the same languages is a waste of human life adapted neither to the circumstances or the prosperity of Nova Scotia. . . . If Dalhousie College acquires usefulness and eminence it will be not by an imitation of Oxford, but as an institution of science and practical intelligence. (Harris 33)

Similarly, Sir Daniel Wilson insisted in an 1860 debate with the more conservative educational administrator Egerton Ryerson that Canadian students should be given options rather than being forced to follow a strictly classical curriculum:

The matter is very simply dealt with. [The student] is asked what is your object in life? If you intended to be a Medical man drop your Greek and Latin and go on with the Natural Sciences and Modern Languages . . . If the young man intends to become a Theological Student . . . then we say go on with your Classics, your Moral Science, your Mental Philosophy. . . . Is there not common sense in

that? Is not that the most rational system for Canada, whatever may be the proper system for Oxford and Cambridge? (Harris 46)

In response, Ryerson countered that the introduction of options would dilute the inherited intellectual and religious tradition and interfere with its transmission to students. Ryerson was the son of Loyalists and accordingly was concerned to maintain Canada's imperial ties. While on the one hand he was largely responsible for increasing the accessibility of the Canadian education system, he therefore also vehemently opposed the curricular reforms and the secularization of education that Wilson advocated.¹⁰ The Wilson-Ryerson debate highlights an important and unresolved tension — one which troubled educational reformers as well as defenders of the classical curriculum — between a recognition that the educational system needed to adapt to Canadian conditions and a concern with preserving the inherited English tradition.

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The divide between Scottish and English pedagogies would be bridged by the 1880s when the emphasis in Canadian universities shifted from rhetoric to the study of literature itself, but in the foundational years it was Scottish persistence that secured a central place for English Studies in university curricula. But what accounts for the strength of the Scottish attachment to the vernacular beyond mere Scottish 'common sense'? Recent histories of Canadian English Studies (Johnson; Tayler; Hubert) hint at possible explanations, only then to pull back from or obscure them by lumping together Scottish and English pedagogical traditions under the term "British." Such conflation hinders any attempt to explore the links between Scottish ideas of self-improvement, Scottish constructions of Britishness, and the success of belletristic models in Canada and other colonies.

A detour across the Atlantic and back to the eighteenth century will help to further elucidate the traditional Scottish emphasis on rhetoric and belles lettres. As we have seen, Calvinist influences ensured that a high value was placed on universal literacy in Scotland. An additional factor in the growth of rhetoric was Scotland's close intellectual ties to France, whose

belletristic movement greatly influenced eighteenth-century Scottish intellectuals.¹¹ Yet the growth of the discipline can also be related to the paradoxical position that Scotland occupied in the eighteenth century. Scotland was during this period an economically and politically weakened yet also highly accomplished and cosmopolitan nation. In the context of a newly-united Britain, education, particularly in the English language, became valuable to the Scots as a means of self-advancement. Robert Crawford accordingly attributes the popularity and growth of Scottish rhetoric and belles lettres to the desire of the enfeebled Scots to assimilate into English society and to secure a place for themselves in post-Union Britain. The founders of Scottish rhetoric and belles lettres, Lord Kames, Hugh Blair, and Adam Smith, sought to excise marks of difference and provincialism from the language of their students so that they might obtain a more cosmopolitan and economically viable identity. "Pure English" was cultivated through the study of an exemplary canon of writers whose works began to displace the classical texts. Thus, Crawford emphasizes, English Studies emanated not from the center of the British Empire, but from its margins among a people anxious to gain a higher status. It arose, he asserts, as "an attempted suppression of native tradition in a process of cultural conversion that was thought of as a move from the barbarous Scottish to the polite British — thought of, in short, as 'improvement'" (*Devolving English Literature* 22).

Scholars of Canadian English Studies have not been attentive enough to the role of Anglo-Scottish relations in the development of the discipline, nor to the way in which those relations were reconstituted on the other side of the Atlantic (a theme which has, however, received some attention in relation to Australia).¹² Crawford remarks that the popularity of rhetoric and belles lettres in North America suggests a similar anxiety on the part of North Americans, and we can surmise that Scottish fears of being marked as provincial in Europe would only be intensified once Scots were displaced to the much more marginal geographical location of British North America. Furthermore, this colonial anxiety would now be one the rest of the

population, including the English colonists, would share. (One wonders whether the need to educate other groups — French, Irish, Native — was not also a contributing factor to the growth of English Studies in Canada.)¹³ Thus Crawford's account of the discipline of rhetoric as facilitating the cultural conversion of provincials is if anything more apt in relation to Canadian institutionalization.

There is ample evidence that one of the primary aims of early Canadian educators was to promote "pure" speech. The statutes of the University of King's College, Nova Scotia (1803) stipulated that in all "declamations, recitations, and in all other exercises, in which the Students shall read aloud or speak in public, great attention shall be paid to their pronunciation." Students were to "avoid all Provincial accents, and other improprieties" (Hubert 27). One of the governors of the college insisted that "a very principal object of the new institution would be accomplished by assimilating the manners of the rising generation to those of the parent state." He continued:

We think that it is of no small importance to this seminary to teach the genuine use, practice and pronunciation of the English language, which in distant colonies is too apt to degenerate, and that the purity of that language, undebased by local or national accents and solecisms, is undeniably to be found in the Kingdom of England only. (Vroom 37)

Notably, these concerns were voiced by Anglicans notwithstanding their advocacy of a classical curriculum. Thus they testify that in a colonial setting, fears of being labelled provincial were shared by English and Scots alike.

The well-documented popularity of Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric* in North America suggests a parallel between the colonial predicaments of Scotland and Canada. Just as eighteenth-century Scots had seen the need after 1707 to make their speech conform to that of the English, so nineteenth-century Canadians were concerned that their language should not deviate from that of their "parent state." Scottish immigrants to Canada found themselves in yet another colonial setting in which their status as outsiders was once again problematic. In insisting on the importance of vernacular education for Canadians, these

immigrants applied a similar logic to that which had fuelled rhetoric and belles lettres in Scotland. One consequence of this logic was that in both Scotland and Canada, assimilating to the imperial culture was to some extent privileged over the assertion of national and regional identities.

Yet the analogy between Europe and North America is complicated by Trumpener's observation that having crossed the Atlantic, the Scots' gesture of assimilation became less anxious than it had been in Britain. Scottish immigrants to Canada enjoyed considerable success in politics (indeed the first two Canadian prime ministers were Scottish immigrants) and also tended to dominate economic affairs. The rapidity and extent of their success set them apart from other immigrant groups, and Lowland Scots in particular were able to integrate into the English majority (Bumsted, *The Scots in Canada* 13). According to Trumpener, as many Scots found new prosperity and freedom in Canada they "were often transformed, morally, politically, and economically, into colonizers. Subsuming their nationalist pride and their ambivalence about English culture into support for the empire, they embraced the compensatory cosmopolitanism it fostered" (252). In her account, the Scots' sense of marginality and resentment towards the English gave way to a conciliatory and accommodating spirit, to an identification with the larger imperial identity, and to a faith in the viable coexistence of different peoples. She terms this faith "the dream of empire": empire as the place in which "Britain is successfully reconstituted" (254).

Trumpener calls this setting aside of nationalist pride "both the cornerstone and the central mystery of empire," but perhaps nationalism and the imperial identity adopted by the Scottish immigrants were not so incompatible as she tends to suggest. We can find a direct precedent for the Scottish immigrants' identification with an imperial identity in the Scots' sponsorship of the idea of Britain. As Linda Colley has argued (and Crawford as well though primarily in relation to literary production), Britishness was in many ways a Scottish construction. Scots had much to gain from the political idea of Britain, for membership in such a body would put them on a more

equal footing with England, which became under this rubric simply another piece of the whole. The Scots' appreciation of the economic benefits of incorporation secured their support for union, but also led them to develop a federalist rather than metropolitan-dominated vision of the union.¹⁴ The English, on the other hand, were highly threatened by the union and by the increasing presence and power of Scots in England, as the Scottophobia of the period testifies. I would propose that the Scots' support for the idea of Britain constitutes another instance of "the dream of empire." Scottish advocates of union recognized that within the context of a united Britain, Scottish ambitions could be realized on a scale not possible before.

If the surplus of Scottish talent was able to find greater opportunity in post-Union England, this was all the more true of the larger British Empire, which offered abundant possibilities for the promotion of Scottish interests. Scottish immigrants who ventured to other parts of the empire brought with them their unique vision of union/empire as both economically advantageous for England's colonies and as able to protect the rights of provincials.¹⁵ The conciliatory tone North American Scots adopted towards imperial authorities thus can be understood as reflecting their belief that Britishness was beneficial to them. Just as the study of the English language could advance Scottish interests, so could a political identification with Britishness. The lack of support among Scottish immigrants to the United States for the American Revolution is suggestive of the degree to which Scots were invested in the idea of the British Empire (Colley 140).

Somewhat similarly, many Canadians saw support for the idea of British imperialism as a means of asserting national identity. During the decades following Confederation, the threat of annexation by the United States loomed large, and a fear that an indifferent England would abandon her remaining North American colony also plagued Canadians. Faced with these alternatives, organizations such as Canada First and the descendants of the Loyalists advocated closer ties with Britain as a route to gaining greater powers for Canada within the British Empire. Thus as Carl Berger explains, a type of Canadian

nationalism developed within an imperialist framework. This brand of nationalism was not incompatible with imperialism but instead saw an identification with the British Empire as a means of advancing Canadian interests. Canadians were as eager as Scots to rid themselves of the stigma of colonial status and to achieve a position more equal to England's. Much like the Scots, they envisioned the empire as a federation of nations, and felt that given a chance to mature within such a federation, Canada would evolve into a great power. And like the Scots, Canadian imperialists at the same time took great pride in their country, so that an identification with England did not necessarily imply underconfidence.

Thus we can profitably link Scottish support for the idea of Britain to Canadian support for the idea of imperialism, both of which were at once self-effacing and self-promoting gestures. Many Scots and Canadians subscribed to the idea of a secular, transnational identity capacious enough to embrace a diverse group of people and nations, an idea which we can trace back to the Union of 1707. In the pedagogical arena, this conciliatory optimism translated into support for inclusive educational institutions. While on the one hand Scottish-Canadian advocacy of non-sectarian education bespoke the Scots' desire to preserve their religious difference, I would suggest that it also endorsed the idea of Britishness by insisting that various peoples could coexist under one institution. The 1850 creation of the University of Toronto, a secular body comprising colleges of various religious denominations, has been heralded as a distinctively Canadian institutional development (Harris xix). However, in light of this discussion, it can also be seen as directly linked to an ideology of Britishness that Canadians sponsored. The all-encompassing structure of the new secular university in a sense mirrored that of the British Empire. An imperial ideology would be further inscribed into the Canadian university through a curricular emphasis on the study of the English language, and later, of the canon of English authors.

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In the 1880s, Canadian universities shifted their focus away from rhetoric and elocution to the study of literature. As universities

became more specialized and the curriculum narrowed, the importance of classics and rhetoric was greatly diminished, and literature was now more likely to be combined with history than with Greek or Latin. This shift from rhetoric to literature tends to be seen as an abrupt departure which thoroughly supplanted the Scottish legacy (Hubert; Court). Yet when we understand the discipline of rhetoric as providing a means of assimilating and of assuaging colonial anxiety, as supporting an ideology of Britishness which was compatible with nationalist aspirations, this later phase of English Studies appears more continuous with the Scottish tradition. But before proposing an alternative reading, we should identify some of the key figures and trends in the idealist phase.

In his *Elements of Rhetoric* (1878), a work modelled on the writings of Blair and Bain, James De Mille, a Scottish-Canadian educator, emphasized that the true value of the study of rhetoric was not elocutionary but lay in the cultivation of taste:

While, therefore, a knowledge of rhetoric is of great importance to the writer, it may be shown to possess a still higher value as a means of culture and educational discipline.

By culture is meant the refining and humanizing influence of art or letters, through which one attains to a more delicate sensibility of taste, and a higher and purer stage of intellectual enjoyment. As a means of culture, literature is at once more accessible, more effective, and more enduring than art. There was a time when literary culture was considered possible only with those who studied the ancient classics; but at the present day a far larger field is recognized. . . . it may be effected by the study of German as well as Greek, Italian as well as Latin. . . . Of all literatures, English is the most fully equipped, since it possesses works of the highest excellence in all its departments . . . some of which have never been equalled. (iv-v)

De Mille thus understood rhetoric as transmitting culture rather than as having a more utilitarian value. While early educators such as McCulloch had defined the aim of education as the acquisition of knowledge,¹⁶ De Mille and the new generation of Canadian literary scholars which prevailed from the 1880s well into the twentieth century were more concerned with the process of reading, which was thought to reproduce

the writer's "mental condition" in the reader. Thus De Mille's colleague W. J. Alexander asserted that "[l]iberal culture aims at the improvement of the individual; and that improvement comes, not from the *results* of the investigation, but from the *process*" (7; emphasis added). In accordance with this new emphasis, poetics and reading came to be privileged over writing and speaking, and direct exposure to literature was stressed.

De Mille and Alexander, together with James Cappon at Queen's and Archibald MacMechan at Dalhousie, were the first to specialize in literary study, which now became a fully independent discipline. Like educators in India and the United States, Alexander and Cappon were heavily influenced by Arnold's view that literature puts students in contact with "the best that has been thought and said." They subscribed to the Arnoldian idea that exposure to great works of English literature would allow students to transcend the narrowness of their immediate environment and to appreciate the most noble aspects of English culture. While earlier in the century, educators had been anxious that their students' speech should conform to metropolitan standards, they were now more concerned that their students' minds should not be provincial. In an 1884 inaugural address delivered at Dalhousie University, Alexander argued that literary study was indispensable because it allowed the student to "escape from himself, his own narrow conceptions and surroundings" and encouraged him to "sympathize with . . . men of very different character, in times and countries, perhaps, remote from his, with feelings and modes of thought even more remote" (8). In Canada, which had neither cathedrals nor basilicas, Titians nor Raphaels, it was left to literature to widen the range of students' experience and to foster what Alexander termed "intellectual sympathy": openness and flexibility of mind (10). Thus the Arnoldian dictum that the study of great literature counteracts narrowness of thought took on greater urgency in a colonial setting, which was geographically as well as temporally remote from the inherited tradition.

Alexander privileged literature, especially poetry, over history and biography as providing more immediate access to the great men of past ages: "In no other study is [the student] in

contact with such a variety of ideas; in no other study has he to make them so thoroughly his own" (8). Not only does literature bring students into contact with the writers' ideas, it also brings them into contact with the writers themselves, with the "master spirits of all ages":

As the chord in one instrument responds to the vibrations of its fellow in another, so the emotions of the human soul vibrate under the influence of a great and ardent character. But in the limitations of time and space and circumstance by which our lives are bound, such encounters must needs be rare, and fortunate it is that through literature we are able to feel the kindling spiritual presence of the mighty dead. It is true that only few can thus transmit themselves through the ages; but these few are among the greatest spirits of our race. (12)

Thus Alexander's Arnoldianism was bound up with an idealist understanding of literature as conveying a national spirit and cultural ideals.

Another proponent of idealism in Canada was James Cappon, who had studied at the University of Glasgow under the idealist philosopher Edward Caird. Cappon adopted the view of Caird and the other British idealists that education is a civilizing force which promotes moral ideals and ensures the cohesion of society. Idealism, with its emphasis on the development of moral character and on the role of the state in furthering that development, endorsed a quasi-religious emphasis on the study of English literature. In the hands of Cappon, Alexander and their colleagues English Studies came to take the place of religious instruction (a substitution which occurred in British India as well, although under somewhat different circumstances¹⁷). They moved away from secondary works and literary history to an exclusive focus on the works themselves and on the spiritual ideals they revealed. It was their belief that in an increasingly secular age, literature could transmit the ideal values that organized religion and the declining classical curriculum were no longer able to communicate.

In adopting an idealist approach, late nineteenth-century professors of English (as well as Canadian society more generally) were staking their claim to the English cultural legacy,

which would be preserved through the study of literary works and the English national essence they conveyed. MacMechan proclaimed in his 1889 inaugural address that "we have a plain duty. To cultivate [this literature] ourselves and encourage the study of it in others. As a people, as an English colony, we are the undisputed heirs to all that is best in the civilization of the homeland" (22). In this preservationist and idealist framework, the student was designated the role of uncritical reader, required to adopt what historian A. B. McKillop terms a "devotional frame of mind" (*A Disciplined Intelligence* 105). Thus an important pedagogical consequence of the idealist turn was that the student became a much more passive figure.

The idealist turn accounts for the fact that in contrast to their American counterparts, Canadian English departments have not traditionally offered courses devoted to rhetoric or "Freshman Comp." Rhetoric was virtually ejected from many Canadian curricula, and where it was retained, it was taught through imitation of works of literature. While Arnoldianism was also influential in the United States, it did not dominate there as it did in Canada, as is evidenced by the continuing presence of rhetoric courses in the United States. In the late nineteenth century, Americans continued to develop a utilitarian model, and thus during the Victorian period the American and Canadian institutionalizations diverged. One result was the relatively early development of literary studies in Canada (Murray, "English Studies in Canada" 449).

Critics have emphasized the rapidity and unanimity with which English programs abandoned rhetoric in favour of literary study in the 1880s, but although methods shifted, the motivations underlying the later phase in many ways resembled those of its earlier institutionalization. This continuity of concerns can be illustrated by a reading of Egerton Ryerson's 1841 inaugural address as President of Victoria College, the earliest extended defense of English Studies in Canada. It is plain from the address that Ryerson is very much indebted to the Scottish belletristic tradition. He quotes a good thirty lines of Hugh Blair to bolster his claim for the need to study one's own language. Ryerson's address places great emphasis on developing correct English

style, on writing and speaking “with purity, propriety, and elegance” (502). His insistence that knowledge is not power unless one is able to express it is very much in keeping with his citation from Blair: “Let the matter of an author be ever so good and useful, his compositions will always suffer in the public esteem if his expression be deficient in purity or propriety” (498).

Yet it is striking that in Ryerson’s address, such belletristic axioms are combined with the kinds of repositionings of the discipline usually associated with its later phase. Most notably, Ryerson’s program for a liberal education firmly separates English Studies from Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, thereby greatly diminishing the importance of rhetoric. English Studies is allotted its own division and department, while Rhetoric and Belles Lettres falls under a second division, together with Ancient Languages, Mathematics, Moral Science and Theology. Secondly, Ryerson’s defense of English Studies strongly anticipates the Arnoldianism and idealism of his successors. For Ryerson, English literary tradition contains the best that Western culture has to offer:

we have the choicest specimens of every variety of composition and style which give attraction and worth to the writings of the ancients. The philosophers, the scholars, the statesmen, the divines, the historians, the poets of Great Britain have given to the world the proudest achievements of human genius and industry. (498)

The aim of Victoria College is not defined in strictly utilitarian terms; Ryerson rejects the notion that a “College is the storehouse of general knowledge.” Rather, “[a] collegiate education is that regular apprenticeship of the mind, which develops and harmoniously matures its latent faculties, and directs their skilful application to the varied and noblest objects of human pursuit” (504). Ryerson’s address also exhibits a loyalist desire to reaffirm imperial ties:

To familiarize our youth with the varied and rarest production of British authors cannot fail, while it opens up to them the ample treasures and unsurpassed beauties of their native tongue, to inspire them with veneration and attachment for institutions and laws which have protected and fostered . . . philosophers and historians, orators and poets. (499)

Thus Ryerson's address, which dates from a period which has been described as preoccupied with elocution, evinces an Arnoldian emphasis on preserving cultural continuity and on transmitting cultural ideals that is usually identified with the later decades of the nineteenth century.

Ryerson's early rejection of a utilitarian pedagogy, as well as his de-emphasis of rhetoric, suggest that it may be inaccurate to attribute the shift away from rhetoric to the importation of philosophical idealism and Arnoldianism from Europe. It is perhaps not so much the importation of these ideas into Canada that accounts for their success, but rather that they corresponded to a program for education and for national development that had already been identified as desirable for an emerging colonial culture. Both before and after the idealist turn, English Studies offered a means of securing the claims of Canadians to Britishness, to membership in the empire. But again it is worth reiterating that this claim to membership was not necessarily at odds with national ambitions. The Canadian idealist emphasis on the study of English literature is in this sense another manifestation of the "dream of empire," of the belief that Britain could accommodate its far-flung colonial citizens and even offer the possibility of increased power within the empire. When Franklin Court characterizes the idealist turn in Canadian English Studies as heralding a "nationalistic tradition" that superseded the Scottish influence (159), he tells only half the story. The brand of Canadian nationalism to which Court refers can in fact be seen as following quite closely on the Scottish model of national self-definition Canada had inherited. While Canadian English Studies eventually rejected the utilitarianism of the Scottish rhetoricians, it continued to assert the cultural membership of Canada in a greater Britain and thus to sponsor the unique idea of Britishness the Scots had introduced.

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Canadian English Studies is usually differentiated from its American counterpart as having been more "receptive" to English cultural traditions and as having deployed rhetoric as a

means of preserving those traditions (for example, Johnson). But how do we explain the adherence of Canadian English Studies to English cultural traditions? Is it enough to say that, as loyal members of the empire, Canadians were simply less ambivalent about their relationship to England than were Americans? Yet we have seen that Scottish Canadian educators were highly ambivalent towards England in their very advocacy of the study of the English language, which was both an assimilationist gesture and also a self-promoting one. We have also seen how receptivity and “colonial” attitudes could paradoxically serve to further national ambitions and the construction of a national identity. Thus while the tension surrounding a discipline which rested on an Arnoldian affirmation of English culture may have been more pronounced in a colony such as India (Viswanathan 19-20), the embrace of English culture by Canadian English Studies was no less complex.

We can register some of the dissonances in the disciplinary history by returning to Thomas McCulloch, the early Scottish educator who was one of the founding fathers of Canadian English Studies. Northrop Frye reminds us that McCulloch was also “the founder of genuine Canadian humour,” and in addition to his pedagogical and theological works, wrote satires of Nova Scotia life. Among these are *The Stepsure Letters*, which he later submitted for publication under the title

The Chronicles of our Town
Or a Peep at America:
In a series of letters originally addressed to
the Editors of the Acadian Recorder, Hali-
fax, Nova Scotia for the express purpose of
showing our people what they never looked
at before . . .

Education is the frequent subject of the letters, which describe the townspeople as debating so fiercely the question of where to locate the schoolhouse, that in the end “they all resolved to prevent their neighbours’ children from receiving education, by having no school at all” (65). A schoolteacher eventually presents himself in the form of Pat O’Rafferty, an Irishman from Tipperary. O’Rafferty is a drunkard and fugitive from justice

who had used his penmanship skills to cheat a distillery out of whiskey. Upon arriving in Nova Scotia, he is made schoolteacher, for as "there is among us a general taste for education, we employed him to communicate to our youth the true tone and accent of the English language" (40). Through this unflattering portrait of the Irish schoolteacher, McCulloch ironizes the Nova Scotians' desire to learn "proper" English and highlights the historical fact that the primary conveyors of this pure language were not English at all. The unsavoury use to which O'Rafferty puts his linguistic skills also suggests that the true value of the study of rhetoric for the Scots and other members of the British Empire may have rested not so much in assimilating to Englishness as in self-advancement and material gain.

McCulloch's satirical letters are highly attuned to the contradictions that inhered in the development of Canadian English Studies, and to the tension between assimilation and self-promotion that contributed to its growth. Thus Trumpener is right to caution us against simply characterizing Canadian colonial society as "receptive," as the English colony which bore the least traumatic and most identificatory relationship to its colonizer. Indeed, in the late Victorian conservationist project of Canadian English Studies, we can detect both the fear of being branded provincial and the nationalist sentiments that fuelled rhetoric and belles lettres first in Scotland and then in Canada. Through the study of English literature, Victorian Canadians laid claim to the English cultural legacy, and at the same time reinscribed the Scottish "dream of empire."

NOTES

- 1 A fuller discussion of doubled colonizations and Canadian English Studies would need to consider the educational history in relation to French Canadians and Native peoples as well.
- 2 Early presidents of Dalhousie, McGill, Queen's, and Toronto were Scots or children of Scottish immigrants: Thomas McCulloch at Dalhousie, William Dawson at McGill, George Munro Grant and John Machar at Queen's, and Sir Daniel Wilson at Toronto. In addition, William Dawson was Nova Scotia's first Superintendent of Education. John Strachan was an influential conservative figure in the formation of the University of Toronto and especially Trinity College, and was also involved in the founding of McGill.

- 3 See Tayler (82-84) on Scottish involvement in the Canadian publishing industry and on the early production of textbooks in Canada. Tayler discusses Scottish Canadians who wrote rhetoric texts modelled on those by Blair and Bain.
- 4 See Miller, Chapter 3: "Liberal Education in the Dissenting Academies."
- 5 Other examples include the founding of Trinity College in 1851 in Toronto by Anglicans in retaliation for the decision to secularize the University of Toronto (formerly King's College) in 1849. Dalhousie was founded in 1820 by Scottish Presbyterians, and Victoria University (now part of the University of Toronto) was established in Cobourg, Ontario by Methodists in 1841, both in reaction to Anglican exclusivity.
- 6 See also Withrington, "Schooling, Literacy and Society."
- 7 The classic statement on the relationship between Scottish education and democratic ideals is George Davie's *The Democratic Intellect*. R. D. Anderson offers a reassessment of Davie's thesis, questioning whether eighteenth-century Scotland was in fact more democratic than other European nations and pointing to the limits of social mobility in Scottish society (21-23).
- 8 See Zeller, *Inventing Canada* (273) on the role of Scots in introducing scientific disciplines into Canada.
- 9 Hubert notes that "[f]or Tory leaders in the colonies, an undoubted added advantage in the classical curriculum – though perhaps an advantage unspoken – was that university graduates would not be ready speakers and writers in the vernacular... Further, a graduate of the classical curriculum would be thoroughly imbued with noble thoughts and concerns for social stability, and thus not given to radical political action" (37).
- 10 See Gidney. Bishop Strachan was another figure who became more conservative later in his career. Rejecting the Scottish idea of universal education he had advanced in his "Report," he came to adopt a more elitist position (Hubert 36).
- 11 See Howell, *Eighteenth Century British Logic and Rhetoric* and Rhodes, "From Rhetoric to Criticism," in Crawford ed., *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, 22-36.
- 12 Chris Worth discusses the complex and contradictory ways in which Scottish anxieties were exported to the colonies in "A Centre at the Edge: Scotland and the Early Teaching of Literature in Australia and New Zealand," in Crawford ed., *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, 207-224.
- 13 The disciplinary histories cited here are largely silent on this issue, and one would like to know more about what seems a key question.
- 14 See Landsman.
- 15 Landsman discusses the role of Scottish immigrants to the United States in debates surrounding the American Revolution: "[Scots and Scots-Irish administrators] established a viewpoint that differed both from that of most metropolitans and from what they considered the local and particularist perspectives of other colonials, affirming the advantages of union but asserting the claims of provincials to equal privileges within it. . . . Their persistence in addressing the problem of imperial union constituted an important link between the Union debates of 1707 and the later American consideration of empire, confederation, and union that emerged in the latter part of the century" (299).
- 16 In an 1819 address, McCulloch describes the aims of a liberal education: "Its primary object is knowledge which could not be easily acquired in any other way; its ends, the improvement of man in intelligence and moral principle, as the basis of his subsequent duty and happiness. Viewing its object as knowledge, it is merely an enlargement of that system of discipline which commences its operation upon man with the first expansion of his intellectual powers. With respect to its ends, whether it be entitled to a high appreciation, must be ascertained by its utility" (*Nature and Uses of a Liberal Education* 6-7).

- 17 See Viswanathan's discussion of the way in which English Studies in India made possible the insertion of religious content into an ostensibly secular curriculum, and thus circumvented the British government's own injunction against religious interference, so that "[t]he tension between increasing involvement in Indian education and enforced noninterference in religion was productively resolved through the introduction of English literature" (38).

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