

Tracing warm lines: northern Canadian exploration, knowledge, and memory, 1905-1965

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This dissertation is submitted
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

To my father, Russell,
my grandfather, Prokop,
and my great-grandfather, Sam—
each of whom, in his own way,
taught me to care about the past

Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

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Statement of Length

I certify that this dissertation does not exceed the limit of 80,000 words, excluding footnotes, appendices, and bibliography, prescribed by the Degree Committee of the Department of Geography.

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The dissertation considers the early twentieth-century culture of northern Canadian exploration through a selective examination of the lives and written works of four contemporary explorers: George Douglas (1875-1963), Guy Blanchet (1884-1966), Vilhjalmur Stefansson (1879-1962), and Richard Finnie (1906-1987). Written from a cultural historical perspective, the dissertation also draws upon recent work in the interdisciplinary study of exploration that understands this activity as an assemblage of cultural practices to do with the production and consumption of travel. Against the current trend of northern Canadian historiography, it asserts the importance of twentieth-century exploration, and of exploration generally, in creating modern identities, in producing and circulating knowledge about the Canadian North, and in creating representations of that region for the private and public consumption of southern Canadians and Americans. Moreover, it argues that closer attention should be paid to the personal relationships between explorers, as well as the bearing of such relations upon the creation, verification, and circulation of knowledge about the North. The first chapter lays out these arguments and outlines the general shape of twentieth-century exploration in northern Canada.

A series of case studies, set predominantly between the years of 1920 and 1965, describe and analyze exploratory encounters within the individuals under consideration—the interaction of their experiences, memories, and beliefs—and without: that is, between these individuals and other northern and southern peoples, environments, and cultures. The second and third chapters analyze the relations between northern exploratory identities and practices, the representation of the North, and cultural trends in interwar Canada and the United States, namely antimodernism and the debunking of myths. The fourth and fifth chapters are detailed accounts of two knowledge projects in which these explorers participated: an informal republic of northern letters, and the preparation of an *Encyclopedia Arctica* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The sixth chapter considers the individual and communal efforts of these four men to preserve their knowledge and commemorate their achievements as the end of their lives grew near, as well as the significance of their efforts within the changing terrain of northern Canadian scientific exploration at mid-century.

Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure and an honour to acknowledge the people who have helped in the realization of this doctoral dissertation. They line, invisibly, all of the following pages, but are here made manifest.

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I would like to thank my colleagues over the years in what became known as the Circumpolar History and Public Policy group—Peter Evans, Martina Tyrrell, Louise Watling, Claire Warrior, Jackie Price, Marionne Cronin, and Amy Donovan—for many friendly moments, lively debates and thoughtful exchanges, all of which have enriched my work. The library staff at the Institute has tolerated a great many requests with characteristic cheerfulness, good humour, and occasionally bemusement. I would like to thank Lucy Martin, Naomi Boneham, Heather Lane, Rebecca Stancombe, and especially Mark Gilbert and Shirley Sawtell. Outside SPRI, I have been privileged to meet Peder Roberts, Annaliese Bateman, Andrew Stuhl, and Karen Routledge, with whom I have had many fascinating discussions. I also thank Liza Piper, who has been a true role model, for her unwavering support and measured advice.

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Chapter 1:
Exploring the Twentieth-Century North

do not imagine that the exploration ends,
that she has yielded all her mystery
or that the map you hold
cancels further discovery ....

I mean the moment when it seems most plain
is the moment you must begin again
Gwendolyn MacEwen[1]

To begin (again), this dissertation is a cultural history of twentieth-century northern Canadian exploration, realized through the individual and collective experiences and writings of four people—George Douglas, Guy Blanchet, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and Richard Finnie—who participated in the material and intellectual construction of this activity. It must be noted at the outset that the continuing presence of exploration and biography in northern and polar scholarship has caused some discord. Given the saturation of these historical fields with the biographies of explorers, what, it might be asked, can another such project possibly contribute? The case against this topic has been made in what might be called this dissertation's home field of northern Canadian studies. These concerns shall be outlined and then addressed by the setting out of an alternative vision of exploration.

Some academic authors regard the history of exploration as inextricably allied with certain kinds of settings—popular culture, or provincial or colonial contexts—that might be said to lack sufficient discipline or rigour, and that militate against the pursuit of serious scholarly inquiry. A strong worry is that the subject of northern exploration has been and continues to be thoroughly colonized by and identified with non-academic writers such as Farley Mowat, Pierre Berton, Dick North, and Ken McGoogan.[2] Such authors, seasoning their works liberally with

[1] Gwendolyn MacEwen, "The Discovery," in *The Poetry of Gwendolyn MacEwen: The Early Years*, eds. Margaret Atwood and Barry Callaghan (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1993), 153.

[2] See, e.g., Farley Mowat, *Tundra: Selections from the Great Accounts of Arctic Land Voyages* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973); Pierre Berton, *Klondike: The Life and Death of the Last Great Gold Rush* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1958); Berton, *The Arctic Grail: The Quest for the Northwest Passage and the North Pole, 1818-1909* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 1988); Dick North, *The Mad Trapper of Rat River* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1972); North, *The Lost Patrol* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing, 1978); Ken McGoogan, *Fatal Passage: The Untold Story of John Rae, the Arctic Adventurer Who Discovered the Fate of Franklin* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2001); McGoogan, *Ancient Mariner: The Amazing Adventures of Samuel Hearne, the Sailor Who Walked to the Arctic Ocean* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2003); McGoogan, *Lady Franklin's*

drama, often take a largely narrative, less than optimally critical (if not outright hagiographical or celebratory), and decontextualized approach to persons and expeditions. For many members of the public, northern exploration *is* northern history. This vision of history as the romanticized rehearsal of heroic and manly deeds performed by a small group of European, American, and Canadian men, complete with the fetishization of their physical remains as relics and the celebration of their actions in imaginative or explicit re-enactments of their journeys, rightly annoys professional historians. They feel that this popular domination of one subject forecloses the possibility of telling other kinds of northern narratives to a wider audience.[3]

The senior northern Canadian historians Kenneth Coates and William Morrison have recently written a conservative, even teleological characterization of their historiographical field that addresses this issue. That northern historians have abandoned explorers, they muse, "like that of western historians who long ago abandoned cowboys for serious studies of ethnic, environmental, gender and class issues in the region, reflects the development and evolution of the historical profession writ large."[4] Explorers, like cowboys, are thereby cast as childish regional obsessions that historians must discard as their subfield matures to full status within national history. The theatrical miasma that envelops cowboys and explorers can certainly lead to the production of caricature and spectacle so beloved by certain audiences. Such representations should be treated with caution. But it is also prudent to consider *why* these characters retain meaningful cultural purchase in twenty-first-century Canada, and how they enable the persistence or transformation of collective political and social narratives about the nation's colonial past, with which many Canadians still struggle today.

This very colonialism, of course, prominently stains explorers within and without northern scholarship today. The exploratory figure in stereotypical representations and previous histories of northern Canada is, by today's postcolonial standards, racist, sexist, and, above all,

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Revenge: A True Story of Ambition, Obsession and the Remaking of Arctic History (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2005).

[3] Recent historiographical reviews of northern Canadian history, many of which are explicitly prescriptive, include Amanda Graham, "Reflections on Contemporary Northern Canadian History," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 59 (1996): 182-98; Arthur Ray, "Recent Trends in Northern Historiography," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 59 (1996): 211-27; Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates, eds., *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2001); Janice Cavell, "The Second Frontier: The North in English-Canadian Historical Writing," *Canadian Historical Review* 83 (2002): 364-89; Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison, "The New North in Canadian History and Historiography," *History Compass* 6 (2008): 639-58.

[4] Coates and Morrison, "New North," 641. This comment demands swift refutation, and one need look no further than the essay that won the *Canadian Historical Review*'s prize for its best published essay of 2009—the western historian Mary Ellen Kelm's "Manly Contests: Rodeo Masculinities at the Calgary Stampede," *Canadian Historical Review* 90 (2009): 711-51.

imperialist.[5] As in other colonial contexts, academic and popular writers on the North have diligently unearthed compelling evidence of these traits within the literary and historical record. The overall response to postcolonial studies in the field of northern Canadian studies has been to turn attention firmly and equitably to uncovering the "other side" of the historical record, to the point where a concern for the telling of northern aboriginal history, either by reading archival documents against the grain or by recourse to ethnohistorical methods, is now a strong, almost prevalent trend in scholarly studies of the North.[6] Given the vast amount of work to be done using these newly favoured approaches and the cloud that now shadows explorers, Coates and Morrison conclude that younger scholars, now wont to pursue "Aboriginal and historiographical issues more saleable to university hiring committees," have "largely abandoned the field" of northern exploration.[7]

This dissertation, written by a young scholar of northern Canada, intends to demonstrate the fallaciousness of the above contention. It is born of a firm belief that the idea of exploration retains great imaginative power in Canada today on individual, regional, and national scales. Gazing back into the rich, if discontinuous and sometimes contradictory history of this attachment will foster a better understanding of why this idea continues to attract and inspire Canadians in the twenty-first century, and how it has led to the production of certain versions of history that alternately reveal and conceal certain information about the past. Fortunately, outside the bounds of northern Canadian historical scholarship, the academic study of this subject is flourishing in kindlier cognitive soil.[8]

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[5] Sherrill E. Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 185.

[6] Julie Cruikshank's seminal work on Yukon oral histories has done much to inspire subsequent inquiries along these lines. See Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990); Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005). See also, for example, Peter Kulchyski and Frank Tester, *Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994); Nancy Wachowich, *Saqiyuq: Stories from the Lives of Three Inuit Women* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Shelagh D. Grant, *Arctic Justice: On Trial for Murder, Pond Inlet, 1923* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); John Bennett and Susan Rowley, *Uqalurait: An Oral History of Nunavut* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004). A consciously methodological appraisal of this kind of history-making may be found in Shelagh D. Grant, "Inuit History in the Next Millennium: Challenges and Rewards," in *Northern Visions*, 91-106.

[7] Coates and Morrison, "New North," 640.

[8] An important exception lies in the work of Janice Cavell, who has searched the twentieth-century historical literature for representations of northern explorers and exploration and has made some thoughtful reassessments of this corpus. See Cavell, "Second Frontier"; Cavell, "Arctic Exploration in Canadian Print Culture, 1890-1930," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 44, no. 2 (2006): 7-43; Cavell, "Comparing Mythologies: Twentieth-Century Canadian Constructions of Sir John Franklin," in *Canadas of the Mind: The Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Norman Hillmer and Adam

Directly responding to such intellectual activity, this dissertation explicitly emplots the Canadian experience of exploration within longer historical traditions of modernity in the West, which have at their heart the material circulation of capital and knowledge through political, economic, and natural historical networks that reached across imperial spaces both metropolitan and colonial, and which were embodied by and sustained in the motives and actions of many kinds of travellers and explorers.[9] Although studies of the (by now) well-acknowledged close relationship between exploration and empire have tended to concentrate on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century iterations, the work of Felix Driver and Richard Drayton has stretched forward, suggestively so, into the early twentieth century.[10] Insofar as the Canadian North remained a definitely colonial space, both constitutionally and practically speaking, until the mid-twentieth century, it is both legitimate and necessary on evidential and theoretical bases to foreground how practices of exploration continued to construct a northern Canadian imperial space in the first half of the twentieth century.[11]

Indeed, Richard Powell has already reshaped scholarly interpretation of northern scientific activity in the latter half of that century. He demonstrates that discourses of exploration, especially those of a heroic scientific nationalism, retained a secure place within the practices and representations of geographical fieldwork accomplished by actors under the aegis of the Polar Continental Shelf Project.[12] Yet the early twentieth-century antecedents of the structures of geographical and scientific feeling that he elucidates are less clear. This dissertation constructs a temporal bridge between the *fin-de-siècle* insights of Drayton and

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Chapnick (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 15-45; Cavell, "The True Northwest Passage: Explorers in Anglo-Canadian Nationalist Narratives," *Northern Review* 32 (2010): 5-34.

[9] Canadian historians have only recently begun to engage with these new colonial and imperial historiographies. See, for example, Phillip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, eds., *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Phillip Buckner, *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Christopher Dummitt and Michael Dawson, eds., *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008). Dummitt, Dawson, and many of the other contributors to this last book explicitly call upon their colleagues to explore international and transnational approaches to studying the past.

[10] Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

[11] An early, assertive statement of the North-as-colony is Kenneth Coates, *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1985).

[12] Richard C. Powell, "Intemperate Spaces: Field Practices and Environmental Science in the Canadian Arctic, 1955-2000," (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2004); Powell, "'The Rigours of an Arctic Experiment': The Precarious Authority of Field Practices in the Canadian High Arctic, 1958-1970," *Environment and Planning A* 39 (2007): 1794-1811; Powell, "Science, Sovereignty and Nation: Canada and the Legacy of the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58," *Journal of Historical Geography* 34 (2008): 618-38; Powell, "Becoming a Geographical Scientist: Oral Histories of Arctic Fieldwork," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 33 (2008): 548-65.

Driver and the later twentieth-century and contemporary contributions made by Powell. It clarifies the presence and extension of aspects of nineteenth-century imperial exploratory projects into the early twentieth-century Canadian North, the evidence for which is ample in the existing political, social, and economic history of that region and era. It initiates analysis of the complex, subtle, and contested meaning and significance of exploration in practice and representation at that time, and concentrates particularly on the relationship between the formation of exploratory knowledge and the performance of exploratory identity.

As a theoretical and methodological model, this dissertation looks consistently to that provided by Driver in his collection of essays on nineteenth-century exploration and empire, *Geography Militant*. Driver outlines a historiographical position on the study of exploration that has been espoused more often of late: namely, that the late twentieth-century salvos of postcolonial scholars such as Mary Louise Pratt against the edifice of imperial exploration presupposed an enemy more powerful and omniscient than was actually the case.[13] Indeed, Driver foregrounds the contested, contingent, and contradictory nature of exploratory discourse.[14] In a key phrase, he proposes that it is less useful to interpret exploratory texts as

[13] In the 1970s, the writings of Michel Foucault and Edward Said laid bare the conditions of the relations between knowledge, power, and discursive representation, and prompted a realignment of academic application along these phenomenal axes. Under the auspices of postcolonial studies, scholars reconsidered the historical actions of imperial Western states; newly reminded of the injustices visited upon much of the world's population, they returned a verdict of guilty against many kinds of actors associated with colonial and imperial enterprises. The postcolonial and postmodern deconstruction of explorers, dating from the mid-1980s, is associated with the work of scholars such as Peter Hulme, Sara Mills, Paul Carter, and especially Mary Louise Pratt. Using the techniques of literary criticism upon the narratives of imperial travellers and explorers, they discovered strategies of representation that acted as spurs to and instruments of the political and economic expansion and control enacted by Western nations upon non-Western lands and peoples. See Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (London: Metheun, 1986); Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987); Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992). A strong example of this style of argument with regard to exploration specifically is Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[14] Similarly, other critiques have emphasized the contradictions, contingencies, and cracks in colonial discourses, as well as their basis in nation-states and colonies of varying histories, societies, and natures. The classic, much-cited refutation is Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). In more recent writings about travel and exploration, other authors have counterposed ideas of continuous transition, unsettlement, vulnerability, instability, and disturbance in such colonial and imperial discourses. See Dorinda Outram, "On Being Perseus: New Knowledge, Dislocation, and Enlightenment Exploration," in *Geography and Enlightenment*, eds. Charles W.J. Withers and David N. Livingstone (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 290; Brian Musgrove, "Travel and Unsettlement: Freud on Vacation," in *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, ed. Steve Clark (London and New York: Zed Books, 1999), 31-44; Nicholas Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 16; Felix Driver, "Distance and Disturbance: Travel, Exploration and Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14 (2004): 89.

"projections of colonial discourse" or "productions of an imperial eye" than it is to consider them as "articulations of practice."[15]

Broadening the remit of the study of exploration from the narrowly textual and visual, Driver regards exploration as "a set of cultural practices which involve the mobilization of people and resources, especially equipment, publicity and authority." He coins the term "cultures of exploration" to denote the "wide variety of practices at work in the production and consumption of voyages and travels," practices which resolve into material, social, bodily, literary, and reproductive or transmissive forms. He emphasizes the heterogeneity of the actors who participate in exploration and the many kinds of behaviour employed in the "quest for geographical truth."[16] He pays close attention to the fractures, collisions, and tensions between different manifestations of practice and conceptions of knowledge, the latter based on divergent assessments of the authority and credibility inherent in the very ability to *know* something. This mobile, fluid, and inclusive model of exploratory praxis draws notably upon the work of historians of science and historical geographers regarding the social construction of knowledge. Driver is particularly concerned with the variety of spaces in which nineteenth-century exploratory knowledge was produced and contested.[17]

Following these lines of inquiry, this dissertation contends that various types of actors collectively constructed and contested the practice of northern Canadian exploration, which continued to produce both exploratory identities and exploratory knowledge of the colonial space of the North throughout the early twentieth century. Exploration, it has recently been argued, is a multivalent term with many potential and sometimes imprecise meanings.[18] In the discursive field under investigation here, the term "exploration" was adopted to describe a variety of practices relating to science, travel, tourism, habitation, and economic development of natural resources in the North. Rather than attempt to define early twentieth-century northern Canadian exploration definitively, and thereby either occlude or reify the boundary work that invariably informed and attended some of these activities, this dissertation focuses "precisely on the unsettled boundary between them," at Driver's suggestion.[19]

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[15] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 8.
[16] Ibid., 8-11.
[17] On this topic, see also Richard C. Powell, "Geographies of Science: Histories, Localities, Practices, Futures," *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (2007): 309-29.
[18] Daniel F. Lester and Michael Robinson, "Visions of Exploration," *Space Policy* 25 (2009): 236-43.
[19] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 2, 6. "Boundary work" is Thomas Gieryn's well-known phrase. See Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 781-95; Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

At its simplest, as Johannes Fabian has noted, exploratory travel is movement through space.[20] Who moved through the Canadian North, then, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?[21] Earliest of all, the aboriginal inhabitants of the North, the Dene and Inuit, had made travel throughout their territories a central organizing component of their lives. Later there came European and American whalers to the arctic waters, and British naval officers and British and French fur traders to subarctic and arctic lands that would eventually come under the guardianship of Canada. The late nineteenth century saw the arrival of men whom Margaret Hobbs terms "purposeful wanderers," reasonably well-educated and well-to-do American, Canadian, and British sportsmen and scientists who wrote travelogues on their exhilarating experiences in the turn-of-the-century northern hinterland.[22] Government representatives had entered the region at about the same time. The scientists of the Geological Survey of Canada and the officers of the Royal Northwest (later Canadian) Mounted Police served as early intimations of national presence, partly to ward off possible claims of northern occupation that might be made by European and Scandinavian scientific explorers also active in the region at that time, such as Otto Sverdrup or Roald Amundsen.

The interwar era saw an increase in the number and kind of non-indigenous people travelling and working in the North.[23] Some of these people lived in the North for years at a time, and explored the region as part of (or an extension to) their occupational routine. Others based in southern Canada, the United States, or Europe journeyed north on "expeditions" that encompassed either short or long stints of purposeful travel that today might best be called fieldwork.[24] The federal government sent not only geologists and policemen north, but also

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[20] Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 23.

[21] A vast amount of geographical or geographically-themed literature has been written about the precise definition of the Canadian North, particularly following the seminal contribution of the Québecois geographer Louis-Edmond Hamélin. See Hamélin, *Canadian Nordicity: It's Your North Too*, trans. William Barr (Montreal: Harvest House, 1978). This dissertation uses the term generally in reference to the subarctic and arctic regions of Canada north of 60°, and specifically the present-day Northwest Territories and Nunavut, throughout which the four men central to this inquiry worked. Blanchet and Finnie also worked in the Yukon during the 1940s, but their work there is not explicitly discussed in this dissertation. For a recent discussion of how definitions of the geographical North changed over the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Canada, see Cavell, "Second Frontier."

[22] Margaret Hobbs, "Purposeful Wanderers: Late Nineteenth Century Travellers to the Barren Lands," in *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshoe*, eds. Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (Toronto: Betelgeuse Books, 1985), 57-81.

[23] The best general histories of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Canadian North remain Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North*, *1867-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971) and Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988).

[24] Recent engagements with the conceptual underpinnings and practices of fieldwork include Henrika Kuklick and Robert E. Kohler, eds., "Science in the Field," special issue, *Osiris* 11 (1996); James Clifford, *Routes: Travel*

clerical and administrative staff and medical officers from the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, biologists from the National Museum, surveyors from the Topographical Survey, and "exploratory engineers" from several branches of the Department of the Interior. These last men had technical training in surveying or engineering; their purpose was to visit "already explored" areas in the North in order to "discover their economic value for settlement, for agriculture or industrialism."[25]

The other major institutions in the Canadian North, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Anglican and Catholic churches, sent fur traders and missionaries to undertake terms of service at the small northern posts scattered through the region. Independent fur traders, trappers, and prospectors established a greater presence in the North after 1918, as did the prospectors and mining engineers who worked for a number of companies concerned with mineral exploration. Travel to the North became easier, especially within the Mackenzie River basin of the western Arctic, and a number of independent travellers and tourists visited the region, primarily during its short summers. This last group of people tended to be most concerned with personal pleasure and adventure. On this basis, they seem to have been slowly distinguished from those fieldworkers or travellers employed more directly in the production, extension, or economic exploitation of knowledge about the northern environment.[26]

In general, however, no firm or universally agreed-upon distinction seems to have been made between the practices of science, exploration, and travel in the interwar Canadian North. When enacting its Scientists and Explorers Ordinance in 1925, the government conflated the practices of science and exploration, and defined them only as having neither commercial nor political ends in mind.[27] For a useful contemporary distinction between discovery and

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and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), chapter 3; Kuklick, "After Ishmael: The Fieldwork Tradition and Its Future," in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 47-65; Felix Driver, "Editorial: Field-Work in Geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 25 (2000): 267-68; Richard C. Powell, "The Sirens' Voices? Field Practices and Dialogue in Geography," *Area* 34 (2002): 261-72; Powell, "Intemperate Spaces"; Powell, "'Rigours of an Arctic Experiment'"; Powell, "Becoming a Geographical Scientist."

[25] F.C.C. Lynch to R.A. Gibson, 16 March 1928, File 5858, Volume 781, RG 85, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter cited as LAC).

[26] In a meeting of the Northwest Territories Council held in 1934, it was noted that "frequently individuals cannot get the backing of scientific societies and really propose visiting the Territories for publicity rather than for scientific or exploratory purposes. ... [T]he difference between the two types of Expeditions [is] that one [is] in the public interest and the other [is] largely in the interest of the individual." Minutes of the 53rd Session of the Northwest Territories Council, unpublished MS, 17 October 1934, File 7951, Volume 854, RG 85, LAC. See more generally the correspondence relating to the Scientists' and Explorers' Ordinance in File 202-2-1 [1], Volume 85, RG 85, LAC.

[27] Ordinance respecting Scientists and Explorers (assented to 23 June 1926), File 202-2-1 [1], Volume 85, RG 85, LAC.

exploration, one may look to an address in 1921 given by Frank Debenham, the Antarctic scientific fieldworker and new director of the Scott Polar Research Institute, to the Royal Geographical Society on the future of polar exploration. Against the work of discovery, which produced new facts and new delineations of borders and coastlines, he defined exploration as "the more detailed examination of unfrequented tracts ... with its concomitant research into the detail of geographical factors already known in outline and into their bearing upon human polity."[28] This reading of exploration—as purposeful travel undertaken to investigate secondary or higher-order problems of remote environments in order to produce knowledge that might have practical application—fits the motivations and activities of a substantial segment of northern fieldworkers working for public and private concerns at this time, including the four men of special interest to this dissertation.

The mining engineer George Douglas, the surveyor Guy Blanchet, the ethnologist Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and the photographer and filmmaker Richard Finnie, during their careers in the Canadian North, wove through and around the public and private institutions that operated therein. Their experiences with many different kinds of knowledge producers and modes of production lend a varied richness to their observations.[29] It may be most sensitive to prevailing scholarly sentiment to call them travellers, even though Stefansson, Blanchet, and Douglas all materially assisted in the correct delineation of basic geographical and topological features of the northern Canadian environment within southern centres of calculation. Yet all four men engaged in privately imaginative and socially interactive ways with the idea of exploration; all, to some extent, developed personal exploratory identities, the natures and consequences of which are illustrated throughout this dissertation.[30]

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[28] Frank Debenham, "The Future of Polar Exploration," *Geographical Journal* 57, no. 3 (1921): 183.

[29] This quality of occupational mobility is an important one, in light of a certain tendency in northern Canadian historiography to structure both narrative and analysis around the seminal institutions in the twentieth-century North—the federal government and their direct agents, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the Hudson's Bay Company; and the Catholic and Anglican mission churches. This institutional focus has restricted a full appreciation of the contributions of extra-institutional actors and the relationships between institutional and non-institutional actors. Some newer historical studies continue to reproduce this paradigm, such as Barbara E. Kelcey, *Alone in Silence: European Women in the Canadian North before 1940* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001) and Peter Geller, *Northern Exposures: Photographing and Filming the Canadian North, 1920-1945* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004). This dissertation follows instead the model of two recent environmental histories of the Canadian North, which use alternative modes of organization in order to represent best the varied motions of the heterogeneous actors with whom they are concerned. See John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006) and Liza Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009).

[30] Felix Driver, "The Active Life: The Explorer as Biographical Subject," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Oxford University Press, October 2005; online edition, May 2010, http://www.oxforddnb.com/.

These four people have been selected for close study partly because of their rich, extant personal archives, which allow a detailed analysis of their affective relationships and of the networks of sociability and knowledge-making in which they participated. The friendships between several of them offer opportunities for useful inquiry into the social aspects of exploration. However, this inquiry is undertaken only in part as a necessary bulwark against continuing assertions of personal exploratory exceptionality. Notwithstanding examples located within the context of clubs, associations, and societies, individual explorer-to-explorer relations have often been characterized as agonistic or competitive, sometimes in terms of bitter rivalry, often over an intended or disputed achievement. Constructing an alternative, fraternal model of interaction, this dissertation investigates in detail the social and intellectual relationships between these four explorers and the impact of these upon each man's career.[31] Each man also maintained a different array of connections to a wide variety of northern persons and institutions. By studying them in concert, one begins to glimpse, and can begin to reconstruct, the full extent of the transnational networks that underpinned the exploration and study of the twentieth-century Canadian North.

As a group of exploratory individuals, moreover, their lives and careers align and differ in ways that prompt a creative contemplation of the activity of exploration in the early twentieth century. While Stefansson was accorded the highest exploratory and geographical honours for his twelve years of almost continuous fieldwork in the Arctic, Finnie did not even like to call himself an explorer. He preferred to use the term "student" to describe his engagement with the North.[32] However, as Johannes Fabian notes, it is valuable to study the negative aspects of exploratory discourses as well as the positive.[33] Finnie's negative reflections on exploration signal the possibility of a very different kind of exploratory, or even anti-exploratory identity that sheds further light upon the larger discursive field of twentieth-century northern exploration. A sense of negation seems to attend these four men's careers, and it provokes

[31] This investigation is pursued in full agreement with Felix Driver and Lowri Jones's hope that, by examining the interpersonal relationships that exploration fosters, such an activity "becomes a genuinely human story, less about the exceptional qualities of eccentric individuals, more about working relationships and intersecting lives, capable of being understood from a variety of perspectives." Driver and Jones, *Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching the RGS-IBG Collections* (London: Royal Holloway and Royal Geographical Society-Institute of British Geographers, 2009), 49.

[32] For Finnie's rejection of the term "explorer," see Finnie, *Lure of the North* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1940), xviii, 66. For his self-definition as student, see, for example, Finnie to Stefansson, 16 December 1939, File 8, Volume 7, Richard Sterling Finnie fonds, MG31 C6, LAC and MSS 196, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Correspondence, 1895-1962, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (hereafter cited as RSC); Finnie to Palmer Czamanske, 24 April 1941, MSS 196, RSC; Finnie to Leland D. Case, 4 August 1941, File 9, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Jacques Cattell, 30 October 1941, MSS 196, RSC.

[33] Fabian, *Out of Our Minds*, 10-11.

consideration of the kinds of defeat and loss that attended the activity of exploration. These men, with the qualified exception of Stefansson, do not fit easily into received templates of either scientists or explorers. Perhaps in consequence they have largely been forgotten, except for Stefansson, who is today reviled. Themes of defeat and loss run throughout the dissertation: chapters 2 and 6 reflect upon lost memories of people and practices, and chapter 5 considers the failed project of the *Encyclopedia Arctica*. The recuperation of these lives and their reinsertion into academic discourse is pursued in the belief that they will have important stories to tell of twentieth-century exploration "that circulate outside standard narratives of disciplinary development."[34]

As should by now be clear, these biographical exercises are emphatically not meant to resurrect old-fashioned and unsustainable notions of the solitary and exemplary explorer.[35] Indeed, they intend precisely the opposite. This dissertation situates the exploring individual as a coproduction of two discourses: those of exploration and twentieth-century modernity.[36] It examines, in great detail, how various practices of exploration enabled these four men to resolve problems related to the role and agency of the individual in the increasingly mass-produced and homogenized society of the first half of the last century. Their engagements with antimodernism (chapter 2), notions of "standardization" (chapter 3), personal correspondence (chapter 4), biography (chapter 5 and 6), and the remembrance of individual action (chapter 6) all speak to the centrality of specifically modern concerns in their engagements with practices of exploration.

This dissertation's investigation of the individual in twentieth-century society draws upon recently articulated models of historical biography, influenced by social history and microhistory, that emphasize the person's creative and dynamic interaction with the society in which they are placed and to which they contribute. Such approaches privilege a person's *times* over his or her *life*, in a reversal of the usual ordering; individual lives are perceived as prisms or

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[34] Powell, "Becoming a Geographical Scientist," 549.

[35] There is a growing concern within studies of exploration to elucidate the roles of actors other than explorers in the execution and representation of expeditions. See Michael F. Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) and especially Driver and Jones, *Hidden Histories.*

[36] The need for further study of exploration in the twentieth century has been emphasized in recent scholarship. See James R. Ryan and Simon Naylor, "Exploration and the Twentieth Century," in *New Spaces of Exploration: Geographies of Discovery in the Twentieth Century*, eds. James R. Ryan and Simon Naylor (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 1-22. Felix Driver has made this point in *Geography Militant*, chapter 9, and in "Modern Explorers," in *New Spaces of Exploration*, 245-49.

windows through which to view and analyze wider political, social, and cultural processes.[37] The actions of these four men clarify such processes both in northern and southern North America. They shaped, and were shaped by, the transformation of the Canadian state's colonial and imperial project in the North as well as the transformation of North American society more generally throughout their lifetimes. The relationship between empire/nation, exploration, and the individual within modernity rests at the heart of this investigation. Having now introduced these three main tenets, it is time to become acquainted with the four individuals with whom most of the following narrative is concerned.[38] After these short biographical sketches, the discussion will present several of the main themes of the dissertation in order to draw together and to foreshadow the discrete and focused inquiries that the rest of the chapters present.

Meet the explorers

George Mellis Douglas (1875-1963), born in Halifax into a family of prominent doctors, grew up in rural Ontario.[39] Having failed the entrance examination to the Royal Canadian Navy, he attended the prestigious Trinity College School in Port Hope. He had already begun engineering courses at the University of Toronto when his father transferred the entire family to England in 1894. Douglas completed an engineering degree at the Rutherford Technical College in Newcastle-on-Tyne, after which he served a three-year apprenticeship with two engineering firms, where he worked on warship engines for sea trials. Thereafter he served as a marine

[37] On this subject, see, e.g., Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *Journal of American History* 88 (2001): 129-44; Nick Salvatore, "Biography and Social History: An Intimate Relationship," *Labour History* 87 (2004): 187-92; Simone Lässig, "Introduction: Biography in Modern History—Modern Historiography in Biography," in *Biography Between Structure and Agency: Central European Lives in International Historiography*, eds. Simone Lässig and Volker R. Berghahn (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 1-26; David Nasaw, introduction to "AHR Roundtable: Historians and Biography," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 573-78; Lois W. Banner, "Biography as History," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 579-86; Alice Kessler-Harris, "Why Biography?", *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 625-30. David Nasaw suggests that this "neo-phenomenological" turn benefits historians as much as their subjects: it recuperates the individual actor as historical subject while preserving the methodological and epistemological gains of empiricist social history and linguistic-turn cultural history, neither of which accord much significance to the agency of the individual. See Nasaw, introduction to "Historians and Biography," 577.

[38] Since biographies of all four men have been published within the last six years, as demonstrated in the next several footnotes, I consider that it is not necessary to give more than an outline of each life here. Additional biographical information will emerge throughout the dissertation as it is salient to particular lines of argument.

[39] For biographical information on Douglas, see Richard S. Finnie, "George Mellis Douglas (1875-1963)," *Arctic* 38 (1985): 76-77; Shelagh D. Grant, "George M. Douglas and the Lure of the Coppermine," in *Nastawgan*, 99-116; Enid Mallory, *Coppermine: The Far North of George M. Douglas* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1989); Robert S. Hildebrand, foreword to *Lands Forlorn: A Story of an Expedition to Hearne's Coppermine River,* by George M. Douglas, ed. Robert S. Hildebrand (Tucson, AZ: Zancudo Press, 2008), v-xxi. Grant, Mallory, and Hildebrand were all able to obtain first-hand information from Frances (Kay) Douglas, George Douglas's widow, before she passed away.

engineer on several round-the-world voyages, and then found work in 1901 as a mining engineer and consultant through the assistance of his cousin James Douglas, an American mining baron. Douglas roved the southwestern United States and Mexico, travelling from mine to mine, until his retirement in 1930. At that time, he moved permanently back to his childhood home, Northcote Farm, which he had purchased in 1907 and which lay near Lakefield, Ontario.

His career in southern North America was interrupted by several exploratory and prospecting trips, occurring in 1911-12, 1928, 1932, 1935, and 1938, in the regions of Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes in the Northwest Territories of Canada. With his brother Lionel Douglas, a master mariner, and the geologist August Sandburg, he began the longest and earliest of these journeys in the spring of 1911. The three men travelled from Edmonton to Waterways in northern Alberta and thence down the Mackenzie River to Fort Norman, where they tracked up the Bear River and sailed across Great Bear Lake to its northeasterly corner, where they overwintered. Both that autumn and the next spring, Douglas travelled northeast to the Coppermine River, which he followed in the latter instance all the way to the Arctic Ocean. His task was to observe the nature of the country, and to search particularly for evidence of the copper-bearing rocks sought by North American mining concerns. Neither his work then nor later issued in any major staked claims, however. He spent his retirement mainly in isolation at Northcote, ranging about his large property and maintaining an active regime of reading and writing about his own experiences and those of others, both within and without northern Canada.

Guy Blanchet (1884-1966) was born and raised in Ottawa, a city which he left at the turn of the century to study mining engineering at McGill University in Montreal. McGill had been one of the first universities on the continent to offer higher-level training in this discipline.[40] Several years after his graduation, he passed the set of examinations necessary to become a Dominion Land Surveyor (DLS). Between 1908 and 1920 he worked first as assistant to, and then chief of, surveying parties working in the northern two-thirds of the prairie provinces. These teams, employed by the federal government's Topographical Survey, worked to extend the southern baselines north in order to complete the region's integration into the Dominion Land Survey system by which property was demarcated and allocated. In 1922, Blanchet was given charge of several teams of surveyors working to make a modern control survey of Great Slave Lake, a task which took several years. During the early 1920s, Blanchet made a number of

[40] Biographical information on Blanchet may be found in Richard S. Finnie, "Guy Houghton Blanchet (1884-1966)," *Arctic* 38 (1985): 342-43; Gwyneth Hoyle, *The Northern Horizons of Guy Blanchet, Intrepid Surveyor, 1884-1966* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2007).

exploratory surveys to the north, east, and southeast of Great Slave Lake in order to clarify the system of waterways on this northern plateau and to assess the area's potential economic productivity.

In 1928-29, Blanchet obtained permission to leave his government duties temporarily in order to act as coordinator of operations for Dominion Explorers Limited, a company that intended to make one of the first large-scale attempts to deploy airplanes in mineral exploration in the Northwest Territories. Based at Tavane, a new settlement on the western coast of Hudson Bay, for most of that winter, Blanchet was later drawn into the massive search and rescue operation raised to find several members of the company, including its chief, Colonel MacAlpine, whose plane had been lost off the coast of Coronation Gulf in the autumn of 1929. After his government position was eliminated in 1930, Blanchet spent the next decade accomplishing various surveying jobs throughout Canada, and later working at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria, British Columbia. When the Second World War commenced, he was able to join the Canadian Army by dropping ten years from his age. However, medical conditions eventually forced his retirement from military work. Through Richard Finnie, Blanchet was able to obtain employment as a surveyor on the Canol Pipeline, a joint Canadian-American defence project then proceeding in the Territories. He worked on a last major survey, one preceding the installation of an interprovincial pipeline over the Rocky Mountains between British Columbia and Alberta, before retiring to Victoria in 1954.

Richard Finnie (1906-1987) was born in Dawson City, Yukon, where his father served as the chief mining recorder of the district and his maternal grandfather published the town's first newspaper, the *Dawson Daily News*.[41] Aged three, Finnie and his parents moved to Ottawa, where the former grew up. Through his father's influence as director of the government's Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, Finnie first went north as an assistant wireless operator on the government's Eastern Arctic Patrols in the summers of 1924 and 1925. He was appointed the official historian and cinematographer of the patrols of 1928 and 1929. Finnie combined these travels with his position as freelance reporter for the *Ottawa Citizen*, a daily newspaper, between 1926 and 1929. In 1930, Finnie senior asked Finnie junior to make photographic and cinematographic records of the rapidly "civilizing" Inuit population in the area of Coppermine. Richard Finnie accordingly spent the winter there, living at the medical officer's

[41] Comparatively less biographical attention has been devoted to Finnie, likely in part because of his relatively recent death. See Anne Finnie, "Richard Sterling Finnie (1906-1987)," *Arctic* 40 (1987): 236; Geller, *Northern Exposures*, chapter 5.



Figure 1.1. Despite hesitating to label himself an explorer, Richard Finnie still reinscribed notions of hardihood and masculinity by "sunbathing" shirtless during strenuous bouts of winter travel by dog sled, as during this trip in 1931. Credit: Library and Archives Canada / e002342723.

house, assisting in his ministrations, and making short trips with indigenous and non-indigenous residents to film the lifeways and cultural activities of the region's Inuit peoples.

After his return south in 1931, Finnie became a freelance writer and lecturer, and his northern photographs and films played a seminal role in the material he published in popular journals and spoke about on tours across Canada and the United States throughout the Depression years. He returned privately to northern Canada in 1934 and 1939, and also travelled there under government auspices in 1937. These three trips allowed him to gather material and develop narrative treatments about the rapid industrialization of subarctic and arctic Canada. In 1942, through the efforts of Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Finnie was appointed the public relations officer, historian, and photographer of the Canol Project. This position led to Finnie's eventual employment in 1948 in a similar capacity with the Bechtel Corporation, a multinational engineering concern. As part of his work for Bechtel, he travelled all over the world to record activities of construction and development on still and moving film. After his retirement in 1968 from Bechtel, he resumed his quiescent interest in northern Canada, and began to publish some articles and conduct far-ranging correspondences with other northern "oldtimers" from his home in Belvedere, California.

Vilhjalmur Stefansson (1879-1962), known as William Stephenson in his early years, was born to Icelandic immigrants in what would become the Canadian province of Manitoba. His family shortly thereafter emigrated to North Dakota, where Stefansson grew up helping with the activities of farming and herding cattle. He took a bachelor of arts degree at the universities of North Dakota and Iowa State, and then completed several years of postgraduate study at Harvard University on a theological scholarship, which he accepted with the provision that he be

allowed to concentrate on ethnological and anthropological work instead. He first went north as an anthropologist on the Anglo-American Polar Expedition (1906-07) headed by Ejnar Mikkelsen and Ernest de Koven Leffingwell, during which time he was introduced to, and lived among the Inuit peoples of the Mackenzie River delta region near to the Arctic coast.

He returned to the Canadian Arctic the next year on a second expedition (1908-12), which this time was funded by the American Museum of Natural History and the Geological Survey of Canada. Stefansson was to complete ethnological and anthropological studies, and his partner, the zoologist Rudolph M. Anderson, would make biological studies and collections of the flora and fauna along the western Arctic coastline. The two men travelled extensively in littoral and terrestrial northern and western Alaska and the Mackenzie River delta area, and went as far east as the southwestern coast of Victoria Island, where Stefansson claimed to have made first contact with a group of Inuit whom, he noted, seemed to have markedly European features. The controversy in the academy and the press over these “Blond Eskimos” introduced Stefansson to the repeated and intense questioning of his northern activities that he would face for the rest of his career.

His last act of northern exploration was accomplished as commander of the Canadian Arctic Expedition (1913-18), a multidisciplinary scientific venture funded entirely by the Government of Canada and divided into northern and southern parties, headed by Stefansson and Anderson respectively. Both conflict and disaster marred the expedition: thirteen lives were lost when one of the ships, the *Karluk*, was moored in ice off the Alaskan coast, and the crew was forced to overwinter far from any settlement and thereby assistance. While Stefansson and several others successfully employed his exploratory method of living off the land, locating three unknown islands in the northwest part of the arctic archipelago and taking soundings of the edge of the continental shelf in the Beaufort Sea, Anderson and his party of government scientists engaged in several seasons of fieldwork along the coast of Coronation Gulf. Anderson and Stefansson developed an antagonistic relationship that led to the significant lessening of Stefansson’s status within Canadian governmental and business circles by the mid-1920s. After his retirement from exploration, he spent most of the rest of his life in New York City, where he published many books on arctic subjects, embarked upon numerous rounds of lecture tours, and served as a consultant on arctic North America for industry, government, and academia alike until his death in 1962.

The growing scholarly and popular interest in Stefansson, over the last ten years particularly, necessitates a brief summary of the body of biographical literature that has been

produced. Stefansson is unquestionably the most controversial personality in twentieth-century Canadian arctic exploration, and much scholarship, implicitly if not explicitly, takes either a positive or negative view of his life and accomplishments. The first school of thought, associated most often with American authors, concentrates on his many exploratory achievements, his well-attested capacity for scholarly generosity and personal friendship, and the visionary qualities of his prognostications about the role that the Arctic would play in the increasingly technological and global twentieth-century habitus.[42] The second school of thought, found often in Canadian publications and more predominant of late, focuses on his poor expeditionary management, his questionable decisions (or "charlatanism") with regard to the ethics of truthful representation surrounding his northern exploits and scholarship, and the failure of his ideas about the habitability and productivity of the northern environment to take tangible hold in the minds of North American politicians, businessmen, and the public at large.[43] A welcome third strain of scholarship that attempts a critical but balanced assessment of Stefansson's life and career has also begun to emerge over the last decade.[44]

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[42] The major works in this category are Earl P. Hanson, *Stefansson: Prophet of the North* (New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1941); D.M. LeBourdais, *Stefansson: Ambassador of the North* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1963); William R. Hunt, *Stef: A Biography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Canadian Arctic Explorer* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986). See also Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Discovery: The Autobiography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962); Evelyn Stefansson Nef, *Finding My Way: The Autobiography of an Optimist* (Washington, D.C.: Francis Press, 2002).

[43] See William Laird McKinlay, *Karluk: The Great Untold Story of Arctic Exploration* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976); Richard J. Diubaldo, *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978); Melody Webb, "Arctic Saga: Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Attempt to Colonize Wrangel Island," *Pacific Historical Review* 61 (1992): 215-39; Barry M. Gough and John Phillips Greenhouse, "George Phillips, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and Supplying the Canadian Arctic Expedition 1913-1918," *Polar Record* 31 (1995): 37-44; Stuart E. Jenness, "Conflicts and Adversities: The Southern Party of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-16," *The Beaver* 76, no. 4 (1996): 34-41; Jennifer Niven, *The Ice Master: The Doomed 1913 Voyage of the Karluk* (New York: Hyperion, 2000); Niven, *Ada Blackjack: A True Story of Survival in the Arctic* (New York: Hyperion, 2003); Jenness, *The Making of an Explorer: George Hubert Wilkins and the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1916* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Walter Vanast, "The Bad Side to the Good Story: Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Christian Conversion in the Mackenzie Delta, 1906-1925," *Religious Studies and Theology* 26 (2007): 77-116; John L. Steckley, *White Lies about the Inuit* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2008); Janice Cavell and Jeff Noakes, "The Origins of Canada's First Eastern Arctic Patrol, 1919-1922," *Polar Record* 45 (2009): 97-112; Cavell and Noakes, "Explorer without a Country: The Question of Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Citizenship," *Polar Record* 45 (2009): 237-41. Many other articles and books published in the last twenty years evince sentiments about Stefansson in passing that are either informed by or similar to those outlined in these works.

[44] See Gísli Pálsson, ed., *Writing on Ice: The Ethnographic Notebooks of Vilhjalmur Stefansson* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001); Pálsson, "Arcticality: Gender, Race, and Geography in the Writings of Vilhjalmur Stefansson," in *Narrating the Arctic*, 275-309; Pálsson, *Travelling Passions: The Hidden Life of Vilhjalmur Stefansson*, trans. Keneva Kunz (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005); Jette Elsebeth Ashlee, *An Arctic Epic of Family and Fortune: The Theories of Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Their Influence in Practice on Storker Storkerson and His Family* (n.p.: Xlibris, 2008); Tom Henighan, *Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Arctic Adventurer* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009). Although John Steckley has branded Pálsson an apologist for

Recently, the Icelandic anthropologist Gísli Pálsson has written a biography that considers Stefansson as a serious anthropological fieldworker and scholar. Pálsson also sheds light on Stefansson's fathering of a child, Alex, with Pannigabluk, an Inuit woman from northern Canada. Stefansson's subsequent silence about the relationship hurt his northern descendants, some of whom Pálsson interviewed. Pálsson contextualizes Stefansson's exploratory career within the wider purview of Western economic and social imperialism and colonialism in the early twentieth century. He has argued for the need to understand the specific social and economic conditions that attended the colonial Arctic at the time of Stefansson's work there, in light of its imperfect congruence with experiences drawn from other colonial settings.[45] His study pays significant attention to the latter half of Stefansson's life as an author and consultant, rather than the former half of that life spent as an arctic fieldworker, with which most of the Stefansson biographies are primarily or exclusively concerned. This dissertation extends Pálsson's research on Stefansson in his middle and later years and as a scholar of the northern and arctic spheres.

Despite recent arguments based on new archival evidence that Stefansson manipulated documentary evidence in order to present his exploratory career in the best light, it would be wrong to conclude that such behaviour renders him unworthy for inclusion in this study of the production and circulation of northern exploratory knowledge in the twentieth century.[46] He was a dominant and active agent in this endeavour, and his personal archives contain a vast amount of unpublished information that sheds substantial light on this understudied subject. Stefansson has been admitted to this study in the full awareness that his contestations and actions need to be scrutinized somewhat more carefully than those of its other subjects.

Natural and historical nations

Four thematic lines resonate throughout this dissertation, but will here be given explicit form. These are the relationship of individuals and nations in cultural histories of the Arctic, the form of natural history surveys, the issue of authority, which knots together experience, expertise, and embodiment, and the role of correspondence in coproducing identity and knowledge. Seeking a thread to follow into the first of these topics, one might note that these four individuals did not serve as soldiers in either World War (with the exception of Blanchet's

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Stefansson (see *White Lies*, 46), I consider that Pálsson is sufficiently critical of Stefansson overall, if perhaps less critical of his earlier career than the recent literature on Stefansson warrants.

[45] Pálsson, "Race and the Intimate in Arctic Exploration," *Ethnos* 69 (2004): 363-86.

[46] See especially Niven, *Ada Blackjack.*

limited, illicit stint in uniform) and thereby did not share directly in important experiences that helped to define their respective generations and nations. Physical frailties—Douglas's partial deafness, Finnie's slight lameness, caused by a motorcycle accident, an aging Blanchet's weakness of heart—defeated their hopes.[47] Embodied realities here contrast with ideal exploratory forms, as seen in militant strands of exploratory discourse, taken up by Blanchet in the second chapter, or once notable national tendencies to idolize explorers as warriors of empire. These kinds of fractures between individuals and nations deserve more consideration in light of the persistence of narratives that bind them together.

This individual-national relationship transpires differently in recent historiographical treatments of polar exploration and in cultural and historical studies of the North in the Canadian imagination. In their comparative study of the history of arctic field science in Nordic nations, Michael Bravo and Sverker Sörlin note the "national claustrophobia" of arctic historiographies, yet affirm that nationalism remains a crucial component of modern arctic histories.[48] Recent scholarly work on the cultural history of polar exploration treads neatly along national lines, with most attention paid to the activities of British and American explorers and national cultures in the long nineteenth century.[49] The analytical framework of such studies also privileges the nation, in that many aim to contextualize the activities of polar expeditions by revealing their enactment, in faraway landscapes, of political and cultural concerns in the countries from whence they originated. This removal of explorers from the "icy backdrop of the Arctic" to "the local tempests of American cultural life," as Michael Robinson terms it, is a strategic way for professional historians to combat the traditional marginalization of their subject within academic histories of their particular country.[50] Whatever the motivation, the result is excellent: explorers and their actions seem less eccentric or liminal once emplotted within their country's contemporary social dialogues. This study follows such a model in placing

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[47] Hildebrand, foreword to *Lands Forlorn*, xii-xiii; "Mr. R.S. Finnie Seriously Hurt," *Ottawa Citizen*, 25 August 1927, File 2, Volume 16, MG31 C6, LAC; Hoyle, *Northern Horizons*, 162-63.

[48] Michael Bravo and Sverker Sörlin, eds., *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices* (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 2002), 8-9.

[49] See also Beau Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism and Geographical Discovery* (London and New York: Belhaven Press, 1993); Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Exploration* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996); Lisa Bloom, "Science and Writing: Two National Narratives of Failure," in *Inscribing Science: Scientific Texts and the Materiality of Communication*, ed. Timothy Lenoir (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 328-50; Max Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Eric Wilson, *A Spiritual History of Ice: Romanticism, Science and the Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Robinson, *Coldest Crucible*; Jen Hill, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008). For a cultural history of northern science, see Bravo and Sörlin, *Narrating the Arctic.*

[50] Robinson, *Coldest Crucible*, 2.



Figure 1.2. Here shown recovering from snowblindness incited by a winter journey in 1929, Guy Blanchet models the fur clothing made for him by the Inuit women of Tavane. Credit: British Columbia Archives / I-68470.

Douglas, Blanchet, Stefansson, and Finnie in direct conversation with their societies, particularly in chapters 2, 3, and 6.

Canadian scholars, by contrast, have written much less about the Arctic or the North Pole, and much more about the North. This compass point has occupied an important, if complex, contradictory, and continually shifting position in conceptual thinking about the Canadian nation.[51] A variety of scholars, the historians Shelagh Grant and Janice Cavell and the literary scholar Sherrill Grace foremost among them, have sought to clarify the genealogical lines of discourse that have privileged the North as a central component of national identity, one connected to notions of sovereignty and development. Grace points to periodic peaks of intense Canadian focus on the North: in the era of Confederation, when Canada Firsters

[51] See, for example, Hamélin, *Canadian Nordicity*; Allison Mitcham, *The Northern Imagination: A Study of Northern Canadian Literature* (Moonbeam, ON: Penumbra Press, 1983); Shelagh D. Grant, "Myths of the North in the Canadian Ethos," *Northern Review* 3/4 (1989): 15-41; Douglas A. West, "Re-searching the North in Canada: An Introduction to the Canadian Northern Discourse," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1991): 108-19; David Heinimann, "Latitude Rising: Historical Continuity in Canadian Nordicity," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 3 (1993): 134-39; Sherrill Grace, ed., special issue, *Essays in Canadian Writing* 59 (Fall 1996); John Moss, ed., *Echoing Silence: Essays on Arctic Narrative* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997); Grace, *Idea of North*; Renée Hulan, *Northern Experience and the Myths of Canadian Culture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Cavell, "Second Frontier." Some literary critics in the 1990s deployed specifically postmodern and autobiographical strategies of analysis in order to reflect critically upon received textual traditions and representations of the North. See Rudy Wiebe, *Playing Dead: A Contemplation concerning the Arctic* (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers, 1989); Aritha van Herk, *Places Far from Ellesmere: A Geografictione* (Red Deer, AB: Red Deer College Press, 1990); John Moss, *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1994).

associated nordicity with racial purity and hardihood; in the 1920s, when the Group of Seven gave haunting images of Canadian wilderness to the nation; in the 1940s, when the frenzy of military activity during the Second World War culminated not only in the Alaska Highway, but eventually also in the Northern Vision that crowned John G. Diefenbaker's phenomenally successful federal electoral campaign at the end of the 1950s; and from the centennial of Confederation to the present day.[52] By this reading, Canadians have been more compelled by ideas of North than not throughout the relatively short existence of their nation-state; indeed, this argument is sometimes made explicit. Margaret Atwood once contended that "Canadians have long taken the North for granted, and we've invested a large percentage of our feelings about identity and belonging in it."[53]

However, others have argued that this claim is simply not borne out by the evidence at hand. Janice Cavell dates the inception of this idea to the 1960s, and argues from a close reading of historical literature that late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Canadians did not regard the North, as the region is defined today, as part of the national realm. A variety of academic authors have also questioned the unpleasant constriction of individual will that results from such an argument. They have concluded that not only do many Canadians care very little about the North, but also that the presumption that they do creates an image of Canada that glosses over the vividly heterogeneous needs and desires of today's multicultural population in the interests of national harmony.[54] Welding a certain landscape to nation in this way is therefore revealed as a preoccupation of the few rather than the many. Furthermore, those few people have always likely been Canadian nationalists, since the North has been consistently implicated in nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourses of anti-Americanism. It is hardly coincidental that Canadian scholars turned to an examination of national discourses of nordicity in the 1990s, at a time when the country was threatened by destruction from within, by the Quebec sovereignty referendums, and without, by the resurrected spectre of American manifest destiny prompted by the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement. By reenacting a

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[52] Grace, *Idea of North*, 68.

[53] Margaret Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 140. Similarly, Sherrill Grace asserts that "no matter who, when, or where we are, we are shaped by, haunted by ideas of North, and we are constantly imagining and constructing Canada-as-North, as much so when we resist our nordicity as when we embrace it." *Idea of North*, xii.

[54] Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 3-26; Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), chapter 4; Graham, "Reflections"; Hulan, *Northern Experience*; Cavell, "Second Frontier"; Coates and Morrison, "New North."

narrow historical genealogy of northern affect, nationalist scholars may have hoped, albeit unconsciously, to preserve the integrity of their country's identity.

Whereas recent cultural polar histories invest arctic explorers with national sentiment, some recent cultural histories of North invest all Canadians with northern sentiment. The Canadian nation-as-straitjacket approach inaccurately reflects Canada's historical relationship with the North and eclipses alternative kinds of relationships between individuals and nations. The North has been called to national service so easily perhaps in part because it is a colonial space internal to the nation; however, given the vastness of Canada, it is also distant, in the fashion of other colonies, from metropolitan centres of political and cultural authority. This dialectic of proximity and distance places the colonial North *within and without* the nation, a phrase that captures the slippage between contradictory representations of the North, and between northern Canadian realities and southern Canadian fantasies of the region.

This duality of the near and the far, moreover, helps to draw out the full complexity of discourses about the Canadian North in the early twentieth century. At that time, southern private and public interests (Canadian *and* American, it should be noted) sought collectively to construct the North as a region newly knowable through improved technologies of surveillance, travel, and communication, and the more consistent application of capital to the location and extraction of natural resources.[55] The production of reliable knowledge about northern conditions was central to the imperial exertion of political and economic authority from afar. However, a strong sense of ambivalence was shot through the idea of a completely and accurately known North. It implied the loss of the old, romantic North that had been too vast to know or control with the technologies then available, and which had therefore acted as a site of endless imaginative speculation and pleasure. There is ample evidence of a continued attachment to previous spaces of imperial labour and material engagement with the landscape, as well as the preservation of sentiments that such a space had inspired.[56] This kind of ambivalence is difficult to discover within or reconcile with national narratives of progress and development. The writings of individuals best reveal these anxieties about the contradictory impulses of the modern world as they bore upon imperial presence and practice in the North.

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[55] Piper, *Industrial Transformation.*

[56] Ann Laura Stoler's work provides an excellent model and justification for the study of sentiment and empire as well as its implication in colonial relations of power. See Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

They also demonstrate that a sense of loss could be constructive as well as destructive: older sentimental configurations ensured the survival of certain exploratory identities and practices into later eras less sympathetic to their strains.

A sustained engagement with individual lives, moreover, may permit scholars to cross different kinds of social and geographical boundaries that through precedent or inattentiveness had previously seemed impervious. Three of the four men examined here, Stefansson, Douglas, and Finnie, lived and worked on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel. This dissertation reflects their transnational activities by studying their constructions of northern exploration and northern knowledge both in Canadian (chapters 2, 4, and 6) and American (chapters 3 and 5) contexts, and by tracing the circulation of information, through correspondence and publication, back and forth across that border. These men, like many others, participated in the transnational flows of material, cultural, and intellectual capital between Canada and the United States that began to mark Canadian life more strongly from the interwar period, and against which Canadian nationalists reacted. Recently, historical geographers and geographers of science have become more attentive to transnational constructions of the Canadian Arctic in the 1940s and 1950s, which was a time of extensive Canadian-American collaboration in northern defence and research; this dissertation extends that work back by several decades.[57]

If a primary object of governmental and industrial activity in the early twentieth-century North was to attain a better knowledge of the region, then it is important to understand by what means they sought to do so. Evidence suggests that the natural history survey, an exploratory method by which European countries sought to know unfamiliar and colonial spaces beyond their borders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, retained significant purchase in knowing the Canadian North at least until the Second World War, and even afterwards, in subtly altered dialogues. The Geological Survey of Canada, the country's first scientific agency, adopted this approach once the terrestrial and archipelagic North had come entirely under the nation's stewardship by 1880. Early geological fieldworkers, entering the region in the late nineteenth century, were tasked with observing the soils, forests, waterpowers, wildlife,

[57] See Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988); Matthew Evenden, "Harold Innis, the Arctic Survey, and the Politics of Social Science during the Second World War," *Canadian Historical Review* 79 (1998): 36-67; Matthew Farish, "Frontier Engineering: From the Globe to the Body in the Cold War Arctic," *Canadian Geographer* 50 (2006): 177-96; P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Matthew Farish, "The Cold War on Canadian Soil: Militarizing a Northern Environment," *Environmental History* 12 (2007): 920-50; Stephen Bocking, "A Disciplined Geography: Aviation, Science, and the Cold War in Northern Canada, 1945-1960," *Technology and Culture* 50 (2009): 265-90; Farish, "Creating Cold War Climates: The Laboratories of American Globalism," in *Environmental Histories of the Cold War*, eds. J.R. McNeill and Corinna R. Unger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51-83.

minerals, climate, routes of navigation and communication, and the native peoples.[58] Several scholars have usefully viewed such inventories of natural and human resources from a perspective informed by Foucault's idea of governmentality. Bruce Braun, for instance, argues that "the survey ... involved bringing the qualities of the state's territory into the domain of political rationality, and in turn into proximity with other bodies of knowledge ... so as to put the state's resources to their most full and profitable use."[59]

This description applies equally well to the fieldwork sponsored by the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch in the 1920s in order to make sense and use of northern space. Placed within the Department of the Interior, this Branch was the first federal northern administrative agency. Its director, O.S. Finnie, asked some of his staff with scientific and technical training to undertake general natural historical programs of investigation and observation. Major L.T. Burwash was given comprehensive instructions prior to his trips north in the 1920s that "suggested every possible medium for obtaining further knowledge of the North and its inhabitants." His assignments included taking a census of the Inuit population and studying their racial characteristics, noting economic conditions, making traverse surveys, securing botanical and biographical specimens, taking barometer and thermometer readings and tide measurements, studying ocean currents and terrestrial magnetism, and taking photographs.[60] Other governmental employees with no technical training, such as Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers stationed in the North, were also asked to accomplish such surveys. In the course of their many long patrols, policemen were sometimes able to garner geographical, topographical, and biological information of interest to the northern administration.

These men must be situated in the tradition, within natural historical surveys, of the "holistic heroes" or "scientific omnivores" who were expected to gather an array of information

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[58] Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), 3, 121-22.

[59] Bruce Braun, "Producing Vertical Territory: Geology and Governmentality in Late Victorian Canada," *Ecumene* 7 (2000): 28. Another such excellent reading of survey and (American) governmentality is Scott Kirsch, "John Wesley Powell and the Mapping of the Colorado Plateau," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92 (2002): 548-72. On inventory science in Canada, see also Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks*; Carl Berger, *Science, God, and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). On the subject of nineteenth-century natural historical collection in the Subarctic, see Zeller, "The Spirit of Bacon: Science and Self-Perception in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1830-1870," *Scientia Canadensis* 13 (1989): 79-101; Debra Lindsay, *Science in the Subarctic: Trappers, Traders, and the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1993).

[60] L.T. Burwash, *Canada's Western Arctic: Report on Investigations in 1925-26, 1928-29, and 1930* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1931), 11. On Burwash, see also Geller, *Northern Exposures*, 23-36.

about lesser known landscapes through the practice of travel.[61] Their presence complicates narratives assigned to the early twentieth century of professionalization and the evolution of scientific inquiry in the field, in which "a descriptive, place-based 'natural history' model is said to give way to systematic analysis, as the natural sciences moved from survey to experiment."[62] It is striking how little *description* even existed in the 1920s of certain regions of the Canadian North. By that time, the western Arctic enjoyed a well-developed and differentiated infrastructure of transportation and communication, shaped along the paths and contours of major riverways and lakes. The region was, as a result, better known than the Keewatin (central Barrens and western Hudson Bay) and Franklin (eastern Arctic archipelago) districts, which lacked similar infrastructural aids to travel and to commerce. When Blanchet was preparing to overwinter at Tavane during 1928-29, the deputy minister of the Interior informed O.S. Finnie that "I cannot think of anything specific that we would like Mr. Blanchet to investigate for us. Anything and everything he gets in that unknown region will be valuable and will add to our general knowledge of the North."[63] General government publications of the 1920s and 1930s acknowledged the fragmentary state of southern knowledge about the North, and asked for the continued assistance of northern residents and travellers in the gathering of further information especially with regard to these two districts.[64]

Altered, yet no less powerful configurations of northern survey survived well into the 1940s. Canadian and American scientists and strategists during the early Cold War lamented anew how little was known about the North, compared to most other regions of the world.[65] During the interwar period, surveys were handmaidens most often to the economic development of northern resources; at mid-century, they provided direct aid to military planning. American soldiers, generals, and politicians had developed a continental perspective that situated the North as a vital security frontier and staging ground for North American offensive and defensive action, particularly as the Cold War began to intensify at the half-

[61] The terms are borrowed from Sverker Sörlin, "Rituals and Resources of Natural History: The North and the Arctic in Swedish Scientific Nationalism," in *Narrating the Arctic*, 109.
[62] Driver, "Modern Explorers," 246.
[63] Charles Camsell to O.S. Finnie, 30 June 1928, File 5898, Volume 781, RG 85, LAC.
[64] Such publications also made explicit the many different kinds of northern travellers and residents who had contributed observations to government files over the years, thus reinforcing both the fragmentary and collective nature of northern knowledge production. See F.H. Kitto, *The North West Territories 1930* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1930), 17, 32, 99, 110, 133; C.S. MacDonald, "The Northwest Territories of Canada," *The Canadian Surveyor* 4 (1933): 5; W.C. Bethune, comp., *Canada's Eastern Arctic: Its History, Resources, Population and Administration* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1934), 16, 69-70, 113-114; Bethune, comp., *Canada's Western Northland: Its History, Resources, Population and Administration* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937), 12, 99.
[65] Farish, "Frontier Engineering," 181; Lackenbauer and Farish, "Canadian Soil," 927.

century mark. North American scientists accordingly directed their research toward clarifying and ordering the northern environment so that their military counterparts could overcome the difficulties posed by arctic terrains and climates.[66] Yet the academic organization of this activity into the new, multidisciplinary field of "northern studies," in which physical, natural, and social scientists worked collectively to create a coherent vision of the region, seems a subtle recapitulation of older ideas of survey.

This dissertation highlights other kinds of mid-twentieth-century activities that drew similarly upon notions of survey. Chapter 4 witnesses the collaborative surveying of knowledge about social, historical, and natural historical conditions of the northern environment by means of correspondence. Chapter 5 draws out the important roles that these kinds of correspondents played in constructing an exhaustive, strategic survey of the Arctic in the *Encyclopedia Arctica*. Such people and networks, however, could not endure the pressure exerted upon their project by the ideological exigencies of American Cold War politics, and the *Encyclopedia* ultimately buckled under the strain.

The knowledge of people and things

The discussion above notes a variety of actors in the first half of the twentieth century who regarded the lack of knowledge about the North as a problem to be solved. Interlocking relationships between the variables of *experience*, *expertise*, and *embodiment* provided a rubric by which to judge how well and how reliably certain kinds of knowledge answered this need. These variables were organized around contested social and technological relationships of proximity and distance, which shifted their valences considerably between the interwar and postwar periods.

In the earlier of these two eras, the Canadian government faced a constant shortage of men who were "suitably equipped, technically and temperamentally" for the demands of northern fieldwork. Moreover, limited funds were earmarked for exploratory work in the

[66] Evenden, "Arctic Survey"; Powell, "Intemperate Spaces"; Farish, "Frontier Engineering"; Fae L. Korsmo, "The Early Cold War and U.S. Arctic Research," in *Extremes: Oceanography's Adventures at the Poles*, eds. Keith R. Benson and Helen M. Rozwadowski (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 2007), 173-92; Stephen Bocking, "Science and Spaces in the Northern Environment," *Environmental History* 12 (2007): 867-94; Lackenbauer and Farish, "Canadian Soil"; Powell, "'Rigours of an Arctic Experiment'"; Powell, "Science, Sovereignty and Nation"; Bocking, "A Disciplined Geography"; Edward Jones-Imhotep, "Communicating the North: Scientific Practice and Canadian Postwar Identity," *Osiris* 24 (2009): 144-64; Farish and Lackenbauer, "High Modernism in the Arctic: Planning Frobisher Bay and Inuvik," *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009): 517-44; Farish, "Cold War Climates"; Korsmo, "Glaciology, the Arctic, and the US Military, 1945-58," in *New Spaces of Exploration*, 125-47.

Arctic.[67] Civil servants' pragmatic response to the difficulty of obtaining information about the northern peoples and environments they were meant to be administering from afar is evident in a certain conflation of *experience* and *expertise*.[68] Inscribing the North as an exceptional landscape, this framework reified the perceptual action of witness or observation, acclaimed on epistemological grounds of empiricism, as both a necessary and sufficient condition for creating knowledge about the North.[69] This experiential move has been used to ensure the authority of select travellers in many other remote, colonial, or imperial spaces the world over. Here, it permitted the government to annex the observational knowledge, however shallow or biased, of northern residents and travellers, and to use it as an authoritative basis for federal policymaking. Officials could also fend off criticism about their administration of the north and the ways in which political decisions were made, and detract from or silence the voices of recalcitrant residents or visitors, by charging that such people had not had enough "experience" in the North to make authoritative conclusions.[70] Despite its distance from the region, the government cultivated the appearance of authoritative rule by co-opting and privileging the proximate experiences of certain sympathetic colonial travellers and dwellers in the North.

In fact, the amount of experience in the North required to produce expertise was a matter of active debate throughout the northern discursive sphere in the interwar period. At issue was the notion of *embodiment*. The human body, as Dorinda Outram notes, is the oldest locus of authority, and it was on this fleshly basis that explorers of the Enlightenment period were believed.[71] Twentieth-century northerners and northernists likewise looked to a combination of variables—constituency, repetition, continuity, variety, and proximity—to test the experiential knowledge embedded in singular corporealities, in order to ascertain the level of authority that could safely be ascribed to that knowing form. The male Euro-Canadian body was generally privileged over that of other gendered and racial bodies, but its assumption of authority was hardly automatic.[72] How many encounters with northern space did it have? How much time had it continually spent in the North? How many varieties of northern seasons and northern environments had it experienced? How closely to the land had it travelled? By using

[67] J.D. Craig to O.S. Finnie, 30 October 1924, File 3918, Volume 666, RG 85, LAC.
[68] Barbara Kelcey identifies this conflation in *Alone in Silence*, 85.
[69] On the epistemological power and management of observation, see, for example, Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 122; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*; Ryan, *Cartographic Eye*; Fabian, *Out of Our Minds,* 185-86; Driver, *Geography Militant*, chapter 3.
[70] Kelcey, *Alone in Silence*, 84-85.
[71] Outram, "Perseus," 291.
[72] Evidence for this claim may be found in Kelcey, *Alone in Silence*, chapters 3 and 4, and Matthew Evenden, "The Northern Vision of Harold Innis," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 3 (1999): 166-71.

such evaluative measures, more experienced travellers and residents were able to question the authority of casual travellers and administrators to express their opinions or enact their will with regard to the North; they revealed that very authority as often speciously constructed.

The dialectic between notions of proximity and distance allowed residents to claim authority over travellers and administrators; it likewise permitted explorers to claim authority over other kinds of travellers. Northern residents, particularly ones unaffiliated with the government, were little deceived by distant departmental "experts" in Ottawa and their hollow attempts at "authoritative" action, from the tenor of their casual comments, letters to authorities, and newspaper interviews.[73] They also foregrounded the element of distanciation in the "back and forth spatial practice of masterful study" upon which travellers predicated their authority.[74] Residents considered that fieldwork created insufficient grounds for authoritative knowledge when compared to the expertise granted through a long duration of proximity to the region, as signified by the act of habitation.

This conflict between residents and travellers arose partly out of a clash between competing paradigms of meaningful northern activity. Interwar travel to the North continued to draw upon what Bruce Hevly has termed the "authority of adventurous observation," an exploratory notion which construed heroic bodily challenge as a marker of observational veracity.[75] Robert Kohler and Henrika Kuklick make explicit this implicit link between physical and moral rectitude: "[T]he rigors of the field inculcate the personal discipline necessary to make field-workers reliable witnesses and reporters, credible to nonparticipants."[76] Some residents, by contrast, challenged the idea that there was anything inherently extraordinary about the activities of northern travel and exploration. They constructed an antithetical narrative of *mundane* or *domestic* practice in which travel and exploration was undertaken routinely as a matter of little consequence.[77] Grand physical gestures were not necessary to

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[73] John Sandlos gives an excellent account of such reactions in his study of northern wildlife conservation policy in the twentieth century. See Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin*.

[74] Matthew Sparke, "Displacing the Field in Fieldwork: Masculinity, Metaphor and Space," in *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 220.

[75] Bruce Hevly, "The Heroic Science of Glacier Motion," *Osiris* 11 (1996): 66-86. See also Powell's discussion of the "precarious authority of experiment" in "'Rigours of an Arctic Experiment.'"

[76] Kohler and Kuklick, introduction to "Science in the Field," 6, 12. On this subject, see also Roy Porter, "Gentlemen and Geology: The Emergence of a Scientific Career, 1660-1920," *The Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 809-36.

[77] Powell undertakes a sustained discussion of mundane and quotidian practices of Arctic geographical fieldwork during a later period. See "Intemperate Spaces."

"strengthen the map" in this framework of meaningful action.[78] While certain travellers and explorers made such isolated gestures, certain northern residents such as trappers, prospectors, policemen, fur traders, and missionaries considered themselves to be collecting information about the northern environment over much longer periods of time, and with much less fuss. It must be noted, however, that neither of these positions were fixed to specific identities; some explorers travelled in mundane fashion, and some residents travelled in heroic fashion, particularly those who travelled only occasionally.

In dialogue with these claims of mundanity, some explorers, including Douglas, Blanchet, and Stefansson, emphasized their adventurous proximity to the northern environment, thereby attempting to foreground their claim to expert knowledge of the region. Technologies and sociabilities of travel were key to their missions. These men tended to prefer modes of travel that allowed sustained and challenging ways of moving across the northern landscape, such as canoe or foot travel; they eschewed the lassitude of the travelling body carried by steamboat or airplane and its disembodiment from environmental conditions. Moreover, these explorers preferred to distance themselves, or at least give the appearance of distancing themselves, from the assistance of aboriginal guides in the activities of navigation and travel.[79] Since most residents and visitors who travelled beyond fixed circuits of northern transportation relied upon indigenous guides, this distance endowed their actions, and the knowledge created thereby, with a heightened sense of authority. These kinds of contrasting understandings of residence, travel, and exploration emphasize the ways in which ideas of proximity and distance informed discussions and ascriptions of authoritative speech about the North in the interwar period.

The introduction of the airplane to the North in the late 1920s did not hasten the death of exploration, as is sometimes claimed. It simply prompted the reorganization of ideas of embodiment, proximity, and distance, as well as their relationship to the production of authoritative knowledge about the North. Those travellers who had acquired a facile first-hand knowledge of the North in a matter of weeks, from the deck of a ship and from short intervals spent in dock at northern settlements, could now gain that knowledge even more quickly.

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[78] This excellent phrase is Blanchet's. See Blanchet, "General Report Covering the Period of February, March and April, 1929," unpublished MS, File 5898, Volume 781, RG 85, LAC.

[79] Although their preferred style of practice differed, as will be shown in chapter 2, Douglas and Blanchet both made a point of relying as little as possible upon native assistance in their travels. Stefansson, using a different tactic, portrayed himself as a kind of "super-Eskimo," capable of combining the best of western logic and rationality and indigenous polarcraft in his exploratory practices, and thereby of operating independently of indigenous aid. Some disagreed with Stefansson's self-presentation, however. His one-time travelling companion and lover, Pannigabluk, told her grandchildren: "'Your grandfather thought he was so smart he could live without me or anything. He could've died if it wasn't for me.'" Quoted in Pálsson, *Travelling Passions*, 227.

Richard Finnie noted sourly that "in 1929 and thereafter, when aeroplanes were making trips on schedule between Edmonton and Aklavik, Arctic 'experts' were created every few days."[80] Arguably the real significance of the airplane lies in the epistemological shift that it provoked, one that took place quietly throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The celebration of *proximity* as the keystone of authoritative knowledge about the Arctic waned; by the mid-1940s, it was *distance* that southern scientists and administrators considered essential in the production of such knowledge.

The new importance of distance is evident in northern scientists' determination to demonstrate the rational and objective nature of their fieldwork. Such concerns arose partly out of the need in some disciplines to sever themselves from suspicions that an inherited natural historical *modus operandi* lingered in their actions.[81] The airplane pioneered a new mode of interaction with the field that, in permitting a synoptic perspective on the landscape, asserted an authority that gained objectivity through its divorce from direct, but sometimes faulty sensory experience. Moreover, aerial photography offered new interpretative possibilities for scientists; they could combine several different kinds of data sets and transform them into a new construction of the northern environment, which scientists came to consider more powerful as a whole than the sum of many personal and grounded observations from which prior knowledge had been formed. These kinds of discourses consistently presented their separation from embodied, grounded, and site-specific knowledge, which was now seen as incomplete and even irrelevant, as a progressive step in the scientific study of the North.[82] Scientists were complicit in the execution of discourses of military modernization, which saw "projects backed by the authority of reason and the latest technologies, designed at a distance and implemented without sufficient attention to local conditions."[83]

This rising dominance of distant over proximate modes of perception, understanding, and authority was accompanied, somewhat curiously, by an increasing sense of the North's closeness to the rest of North America. Improved technologies and systems of transportation and communication had rendered it more easily accessible to visitors. Global iterations of these regional developments, including the later development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, had brought the Soviet Union within reach of North American space, in which the North served as a potential battleground and bulwark against invasion. Moreover, the North, although still

[80] Richard Finnie, *Canada Moves North* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1942), 164.
[81] Powell, "'Rigours of an Arctic Experiment,'" 1798; Bocking, "A Disciplined Environment," 283.
[82] This set of arguments is advanced in Bocking, "A Disciplined Environment."
[83] Farish and Lackenbauer, "Canadian Soil," 924.

not well understood by southern North Americans, had become both less exceptional and newly intelligible through its inclusion in a global series of "hostile" or non-temperate environments, many of which were situated in current or recent colonial spaces.[84] This lessening of exceptionality, combined with advances in technology, also made the North seem more amenable to experimental fieldwork not dissimilar to that enacted in more temperate spaces.[85] Further in this vein, scientists began also to favour their disciplinary affiliations over their spatial ones, and considered themselves less "arctic scientists" than biologists, for example, who happened to conduct fieldwork in arctic spaces.[86]

Yet it is crucial to note that the conquest of proximity by distance in discourses of northern authority was both incomplete and contested. Richard Powell's work shows how the scientists of the Polar Continental Shelf Project were unable to sustain their "precarious authority of experiment" to their complete satisfaction.[87] Moreover, these scientists, as well as other scientists and military agents in a variety of circumstances, continued to draw upon exploratory rhetoric to sanction and to celebrate the advance of modernity into the North.[88] Scholars know much less, however, about the ways in which explorers and other northern residents, travellers, and enthusiasts contested the new hegemony of distance. This question drives the analysis of many of the following chapters. The nuanced and complex reactions of Douglas and Blanchet to this new order, strained through the filter of antimodernism, are considered in chapter 2. All four men were concerned that distance from northern space produced a parallel distance from northern history, which they sought to combat in activities of commemoration, as discussed in chapter 6.

It should also be noted that the postwar academic-military-industrial complex of northern research distanced itself, through new standards of professionalization, from many of the people who had contributed to the production of northern knowledge before the war. This dissertation emphasizes the less recognized extension of proximal sensibilities into the postwar era, as incarnate in several collective projects of northern knowledge production that maintained both proximity to and distance from prominent scientific and military initiatives of that period. Chapter 4 will consider the workings of networks of personal correspondence, and Chapter 5 will consider the circumstances of the never-published *Encyclopedia Arctica*.

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[84] Farish, "Frontier Engineering."
[85] Powell, "Intemperate Spaces"; Powell, "'Rigours of an Arctic Experiment.'"
[86] Bocking, "A Disciplined Environment."
[87] Powell, "Intemperate Spaces"; Powell, "'Rigours of an Arctic Experiment.'"
[88] Farish, "Frontier Engineering," 189, 191; Powell, "'Rigours of an Arctic Experiment'"; Bocking, "A Disciplined Environment," 284; Farish and Lackenbauer, "Canadian Soil," 926.

Mention of chapter 4's subject matter leads the discussion to the final theme of this dissertation, which has to do with the role of correspondence in producing both exploratory identities and northern knowledge. Correspondence is here considered explicitly as a practice of exploration. This characterization accords well with the privileged role of this activity in the collective production of colonial knowledge in older natural historical and scientific networks. This dissertation demonstrates the extension of such networks into the twentieth century, and reads them through the rich literature that historians, geographers, and literary critics have produced on the collective creation and circulation of knowledge through correspondence more generally (for which, see chapter 4). At the same time, this dissertation considers that approaching explorers through their correspondence well reveals the complex processes through which individuals negotiate and maintain their identities as exploring persons. The interpersonal nature of correspondence also permits a better reconstruction of the social behaviours and networks which permitted, and did not permit, the circulation of unpublished information about the North among northerners and southerners alike. Finally, correspondence can provoke intriguing glimpses into personal spaces of northern knowledge production, both exploratory and mundane, in the North and in the South. These three points will be expanded below.

While Stefansson seemed never to doubt his exploratory status, epistolary activity provided the opportunity for Douglas, Blanchet, and Finnie to clarify and to perform their exploratory identities. The extant records of these textual performances provide the strongest motivation for this dissertation's presentation of these men as explorers. They turned over the idea of exploration in their minds throughout their lives, holding forth at length sometimes about why they were or were not explorers, and how they felt about the deeds of other actual or would-be explorers. Through their various characterizations, prognostications, and justifications, the cultural historian can glean invaluable information about the tensions and contradictions that attended ideas of purposeful travel or "exploration" in northern Canada, as well as popular notions of explorers and exploration in Canada, in the United States, and in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century. Here, surely, is some proof that explorers, at least those of northern Canada, retained the personal desire and the cultural ability to represent themselves as such well into the last century. A deep engagement with this primary literature also helps the historian balance individual and national scales of exploratory representation. In addition to recounting the ways in which national narratives saw, or wished

to see, northern explorers, one must just as assiduously illuminate the ways that northern explorers saw, or wanted to see, themselves.

These identities, however, were constructed within the context of various social relationships that were also characterized as northern. In one of his letters to Stefansson, Blanchet referred to "a certain community of interest among those who have lived in the North and have understood it."[89] The letters of these four men help to clarify these mainly fraternal networks of northern sociability, comprised of men bound together by their northern experiences and interests.[90] Their correspondence illuminates how relationships were sustained through social activities that reinscribed their identities as men of the North and that strengthened personal friendships. Such activities included "Arctic nights" at men's clubs, sporting matches, parties, and visits to each other's houses.[91] Relationships could also be cemented through ties that bound the families of friends more closely together. One particularly affective blend of northern work and friendship was evident in Douglas's appointment as godfather to several "godsons of the North," sons of close friends whom he had met in that region.[92]

The elucidation of these relationships becomes most important if one accepts the vital role of social knowledge in the verification and production of natural knowledge.[93] Indeed, this web of interaction doubled as a constellation of conduits through which not only information and opinion, but also rumour and gossip was disseminated, in a kind of southern corollary to the infamous "moccasin telegraph" of the North. The trust fostered by northern friendships and acquaintances permitted the informal circulation of knowledge in ways that both paralleled and outstripped more formal pathways of dissemination. The existence of such outlets is particularly significant in light of the northern Canadian administration's official censorship of government

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[89] Blanchet to Stefansson, 11 January 1927, MSS 196, RSC.

[90] Kelcey, *Alone in Silence*, 87, 95.

[91] See, e.g., Finnie to Douglas, 6 December 1932 and 10 February 1933, both File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Stefansson, 25 February 1934, MSS 196, RSC; Evelyn Stefansson to Finnie, 10 February 1945, MSS 196, RSC; Finnie to Douglas, 28 April 1947, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; P.G. Downes to George Whalley, 14 June 1955, File 20, Box 2, George Whalley fonds, Location 1032c, Queen's University Archives (hereafter cited as QUA). On one such occasion in 1928, Douglas saw O.S. Finnie, D.L. McKeand, and Blanchet in the NWTYB offices in the morning, lunched with the latter two thereafter, and joined them once more for dinner at one of Ottawa's golf clubs, after which the party played bridge and cribbage. Douglas to Blanchet, 11 October 1945, File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.

[92] As P.G. Downes wrote to Finnie, "Did I mention that we asked George Douglas to be Nicky's god-father, an office to which he consented after great deliberation, and after rationalizing it through, he assured me, K's urging." Downes to Finnie, 21 December 1952, File 5, Volume 6, MG31 C6, LAC; see also Frances Douglas to Finnie, 26 August 1985, File 7, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[93] This argument is made most famously in Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

reports and the reports of travellers indebted to the government for passage north. Between 1920 and 1950, this administration, led by the senior bureaucrat R.A. Gibson, also regularly inhibited the efforts of scientists and other researchers to obtain current and accurate facts about the North, and reserved a special dislike for Stefansson.[94] It was through his friendship with certain members of the administration that Finnie was able to circumvent this censorship and facilitate the passage of information to Stefansson and other people through published and unpublished means.[95] More will be said about the coproduction of social relationships and northern knowledge in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Correspondence, while meant primarily to bridge the space between two people, can also reveal much about the spaces of its composition. This dissertation conducts a sustained investigation into the kinds of private spaces in which exploratory knowledge was produced and into the ways in which those spaces underwrote the authority of that knowledge.[96] Certain spaces were constructed as exploratory, such as the discrete campsites throughout the North from which Blanchet and Douglas drew meaning (chapter 2), or the wide-ranging property in Ontario in which Douglas continued to perform his exploratory identity after his retirement from the North (chapter 4). The mundane space with which this dissertation is particularly concerned is the personal library/archive, embedded within domestic structures (chapters 4, 5, and 6). Recalling notions of the book-lined study from which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century natural historians once laboured to produce knowledge, these latter-day studies seem similarly to assert the extensive expertise of their owners. Once again, such spaces bespeak the survival of certain narratives from earlier centuries well into the twentieth. They also provide situated evidence that alternative modes of producing northern knowledge remained possible, if no longer prominent, into the 1960s.

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[94] Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 27, 89, 123, 129, 143-44; Evenden, "Arctic Survey," 55-56. For evidence of continued government censorship after Gibson's retirement, see Farish and Lackenbauer, "High modernism," 540-41. According to Grant (p. 27), Gibson was once heard to remark, "We don't want any goddamn scientists in our Arctic." To Stefansson, Finnie wrote, "[T]he [RCMP] Commissioner, along with other heads of department, adheres to an agreement made a little while ago that all inquiries (notably Stefansson's) relating to the Northwest Territories would be referred to the N.W.T. Administration. Thus, you see, so long as you are at the mercy of people like Gibson and [his deputy] McKeand, you are right behind the eight ball." Finnie to Stefansson, 29 November 1941, MSS 196, RSC and File 9, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. On this topic, see also Stefansson to Finnie, 18 March 1940, File 8, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Stefansson, 4 April 1940, MSS 196, RSC and File 8, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Stefansson to Finnie, 25 April 1940, MSS 196, RSC; Diubaldo, *Canadian Arctic*, 209-10.

[95] Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 143.

[96] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 11-20. See also David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), chapter 2.

As a way of concluding this thematic introduction, one might look to the suggestions and intentions embedded in the title of this dissertation. It is taken from a folk song entitled "Northwest Passage," in which Stan Rogers sings of following the hand of Franklin, "tracing one warm line through a land so wide and savage," in order to find the Northwest Passage. In light of the relationship traced above between the North and Canadian identity, it is not incidental to note that CBC listeners once overwhelmingly selected this song as an alternate national anthem, or that the current Canadian prime minister, Stephen Harper, cites it as such.[97] This dissertation, then, traces the warm, or intimate lines that Douglas and Blanchet left behind as they travelled through the North, and those that they retraced of earlier travellers. It traces the warm, or friendly lines of correspondence that criss-crossed Canada and the United States, which connected Douglas in Peterborough, Blanchet in Ottawa and later Victoria, Stefansson in New York and New Hampshire, and Finnie in Ottawa and later California, to each other and to other friends and acquaintances. It traces the warm, or passionate lines of handwriting and typescript in which they recorded different kinds of knowledge about the North and questioned or condemned the views of others with whom they did not agree. Finally, it confirms the existence of many kinds of warm, or active lines that connect past practices of exploration in earlier centuries to those of the early and the later twentieth century. Through the faithful pursuit of these lines, this dissertation traces a new history of early twentieth-century northern Canadian exploration.

[97] Harper's strong interest in the Canadian Arctic is consciously patterned upon that of his predecessor, John G. Diefenbaker, also a Conservative prime minister who hailed from Western Canada. Diefenbaker, in turn, cited Stefansson as an inspiration for his vision of northern development. See Diefenbaker, introduction to *Pathfinders of the North,* by Lawrence F. Jones and George Lonn (Toronto: Pitt Publishing Company, 1970), vii-viii. These kinds of subtle affective genealogies demonstrate how very long certain ideas of the Canadian North can survive, if not explicitly, to influence the policies and affinities of later generations.

Chapter 2: A Northern Antimodernism

> *[I]t is interesting to note how frequently the discourse on exploration has been construed as a narrative of loss ....*
>
> Felix Driver[1]

The Indian and the carpenter

When, in 1935, George Douglas and Guy Blanchet undertook a summer of fieldwork together in northern Canada, they should have been ideal partners. Both had much experience travelling in the North, and they shared a level-headed, professional approach that emphasized both careful preparation for fieldwork and its responsible execution. However, their divergent styles of work, rooted in disparate philosophical frameworks, came to cause friction, as Douglas described:

> Blanchet + I, both competent and experienced in our respective methods, were simply quite hopeless together. Blanchet is like an Indian who knows how to handle an axe and a crooked knife and nothing else, yet with these implements will 'get by.' While I am like a carpenter who must have many and complicated tools but who knows their purpose, when and how to handle them. And to keep them in good shape![2]

These two different manners of being in the North were also evident in their respective attitudes toward maintaining camp. Blanchet again evinced what Douglas termed an "Indian" indifference to comfort, cleanliness and order, whereas the latter required (though this word is unspoken) a more "civilized" approach to living in the bush. Their contrast crystallized, for both men, in Douglas's enduring struggle to keep their cooking equipment clean. Many years later, Blanchet wrote amusedly: "We were different in our habits. In washing dishes, George would boil two pails of water if even for one cup, one spoon. I would swish mine in the lake."[3]

Despite these differences, both Blanchet and Douglas travelled, and thought, about their northern travels in ways that signal their participation in the historical phenomenon of antimodernism. Emerging first at the *fin de siècle*, antimodernism constituted a response within Western societies to the political, economic, social, and cultural changes born of

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[1] Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 216. Jaś Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés echo this thought in calling modern travel writing "a literature of disappointment." See their introduction to *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, eds. Jaś Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1999), 5.

[2] George Douglas to Jim Douglas, 17 September 1935, File 7, Volume 5, George Mellis Douglas fonds, MG30 B95, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter cited as LAC).

[3] Guy Blanchet to George Whalley, 17 January 1963, File 3, Box 2, George Whalley fonds, Location 1032c, Queen's University Archives (hereafter cited as QUA).

industrialization and modernization. The dominant form of American antimodernism, in the classic phrase of T.J. Jackson Lears, was "the recoil from an 'overcivilized' modern existence to more intense forms of physical or spiritual experience" thought to exist in "Oriental," medieval, or primitive cultures.[4] Yet this desire to retreat to alternative times and places often co-existed ambivalently with an enthusiasm for Western society's material progress. Indeed, in creating a yearning for authentic experience, antimodernism helped to bring about the characteristically twentieth-century "therapeutic world view." In contrast to the Protestant ethos of salvation through self-denial which had formerly been dominant in North American society, this new world view promised the attainment of immediate self-fulfillment through exuberant and healthy activity, and hastened an emergent culture of consumption.

The ideals and practices of antimodernism and early twentieth-century exploration may be fruitfully juxtaposed in a number of ways. Situating Douglas's and Blanchet's attitudes within prevalent and contemporary cultural discourses helps to combat any lingering notion that exploratory exceptionality may have inspired their actions. This chapter casts their northern expeditions of the 1920s and 1930s as (admittedly vigorous) examples of the therapeutic recourse to nature that many middle-class Canadians, particularly their fellow Ontarians, sought from the late nineteenth century onward. Activity out of doors was believed to combat the daily stresses and anxieties that living in a modern, increasingly urban world seemed to invite. Antimodernism and exploration of this period also coincide in a shared concern with self-control. In reaction to the idea that society's bureaucratization and rationalization was steadily sapping individuals of the ability to influence their own destinies, antimodernists, including Blanchet, sought out activities and circumstances that allowed them to wrest back some control. As Johannes Fabian has demonstrated, hygienic practices of self-control were also an essential part of the exploratory enterprise. These practices ensured the explorer's continual custody of physical and mental authority as well as the successful completion of expeditions.[5] Of the two explorers considered here, Douglas was the more concerned with this kind of self-possession.

Finally, although antimodernism and exploration may, at first glance, be regarded as iconoclastic departures from an established social order, both demonstrate a complex blend of accommodation and protest to that very order. Lears argues that while antimodernists tried to

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

[5] Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

salvage meaning and purpose from the crumbling Protestant edifice of the late nineteenth century, their efforts, ironically, also helped to ease the transition to the secular consumer culture of the next century.[6] Similarly, it is now well understood that exploration, while sometimes construed as a romantic and heroic quest in little-known places where most dared not go, also enabled the erection of colonial and imperial arrangements the world over. Variations of antimodernism and exploration could enshrine or challenge hegemonic attitudes toward race, gender, and class, and often did both concomitantly.

After outlining the characteristics of certain antimodern reactions that were contemporaneous and relevant to the lives of Blanchet and Douglas, this chapter will delineate the antimodern sensibilities that these two men displayed in the course of their northern expeditions. The evidence for their beliefs arises from their unpublished field notes and letters and their published articles and books. Blanchet seized control over his life in the field through an active, martial, and playfully "Indian" engagement with the northern environment. As a foil to this performance, he summoned visions of the region's "degenerating" Chipewyan peoples, whom he believed had fallen into physical and mental decay through their contact with southern civilization. Douglas, meanwhile, took comfort from his carefully controlled forays into a northern environment that he viewed nostalgically, and which seemed to change little, in contrast to the rest of the world. His private experience of northern temporality increasingly slid away from a public time in which he had less control over his journeys, and which yielded up what was, to Douglas, the lamentable industrialization of the North.

These two men were united in their ambivalence about the introduction of the airplane to northern exploration. This conflict highlights the paradox of their antimodernism: their work assisted the coming of the modern North, and yet they regretted the loss of active engagement with the land and the personal knowledge that they believed an older kind of exploration had given. Throughout, this chapter notes these interactive, intimate relationships with the land, as represented by various kinds of trace. The insistent presence of such traces in the writings of both men suggests the hitherto unnoticed persistence in this period of an old imperial sentimentality about the North, predicated upon certain relationships with people and places and technologies of travel that were quickly being made historical with the introduction of consciously modern alternatives. Feeling increasingly displaced in the region that, to them, had been both paradise and haven, Douglas's and Blanchet's colonial intimacies could easily become colonial anxieties.

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[6] Lears, *No Place of Grace*, xvi.

A southern antimodernism for the North

Antimodernism can be understood as a complex of related reactions to the rapid, sweeping changes to everyday life in the Western world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet these reactions hardly ever took the form of a complete repudiation of the modern world. Antimodernism's ambivalence toward modernity is best explained by situating this movement squarely within the larger paradoxical and contradictory state of modernity itself: as Marshall Berman had it, to be truly modern is to be antimodern.[7] Modernity brought great structural changes to most Western countries. Their citizens witnessed the rise of secular forms of power such as the political nation-state, the emergence of capitalist, industrial economies based on systems of monetized exchange, the greater movement of people into Western nations, and their concentration in flourishing cities and office blocks. They also felt an acceleration of daily affairs caused by the collapse of the distance-time ratio that new systems of mass transportation and communication had initiated, and perhaps also a weakening of traditional values and notions of community, which were supplemented or replaced by ideals of individualism, material progress, science, and technical rationality.[8] Antimodernists were not immune to the popular faith in material and moral progress that accompanied these changes, but they often sounded notes of caution and protest, based on memories of and nostalgia for past modes of existence. Looking forward and backward simultaneously, like the two-faced Roman god Janus, antimodernism has been described as "a way to negotiate the present by bringing the past into the future."[9]

Although Lears originally characterized antimodernism as a late-nineteenth-century movement prevalent among the middle and upper classes in the northeastern United States, it has since been noted in other times and places. Further studies have replicated, confirmed, and built upon Lears's conclusions to the point where antimodernism has been declared a

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[7] Lynda Jessup, "Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: An Introduction," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 4; Amy Ogata, "Artisans and Art Nouveau in Fin-de-siècle Belgium: Primitivism and Nostalgia," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, 166; Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 14. See also Bruno Latour's discussion of the close relation between moderns and antimoderns in *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

[8] Kim Sawchuk, "Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Standardization of Time," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, 157-58; Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 16-19; Jessup, "Introduction," 4. See also Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).

[9] Quoted in Kim Sawchuk, "Modernity, Nostalgia," 162.

fundamental aspect of the twentieth-century experience.[10] Ian McKay has made the most notable contribution to the historical study of antimodernism in Canada. His book *The Quest of the Folk* investigates the invention of a set of ideas surrounding the rural "Folk" of twentieth-century Nova Scotia, whom folklorists and cultural producers promoted as the truest avatars of that region, and around whom they built a thriving tourist industry. In using the term "Innocence" to define this movement, McKay emphasizes that Nova Scotians, while sharing in the wider impulses that drove antimodernism around the world, created a distinctive variant that responded directly to local concerns and circumstances.[11] Antimodernism took many individual and collective forms across different regional and national spaces at different times. As a dissenting response, or collection of responses, to modernity, it should always be moored to a particular modern time and space. Various North American, Ontarian-Canadian, and northernist strands of antimodernism that formed a backdrop to Blanchet's and Douglas's actions will now be considered.

One pervasive and persistent outcropping of antimodernism, the back-to-nature movement, spanned North America and bridged the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[12] Most commonly found among middle- and upper-class city dwellers, it was rooted in a worry that modern, urban living could be detrimental to one's health, a fear encapsulated in the term "overcivilization." Possible disorders spanned the spectrum of medical response: the increased pace of life was thought to bring about corresponding nervousness and anxiety, while the lack of physical activity in white-collar jobs, in which an increasing amount of the population worked, could cause physical enervation. Either way, the issue was the sapping of one's strength, for which the term neurasthenia was devised, and for which the cure of outdoor recreation of some kind was most often recommended.[13] In rural and wild environments near to and far away from cities, urbanites sought remedial activities that ranged from the gentle, such as cycling, birdwatching, or walking in the countryside, to the strenuous, such as hiking,

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[10] James Smithies, "An Antimodern Manqué: Monte Holcroft and *The Deepening Stream*," *New Zealand Journal of History* 40 (2006): 171. Smithies's article gives an excellent summary of various national forms of antimodernism in the interwar period.

[11] Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

[12] Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Rural America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969); George Altmeyer, "Three Ideas of Nature in Canada, 1893-1914," in *Consuming Canada: Readings in Environmental History*, eds. Chad and Pam Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1995), 96-118; Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), chapter 5.

[13] On neurasthenia, see Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 47-58; Jasen, *Wild Things*, 107-12; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), chapter 3.

camping, canoeing, and alpine climbing. This particular kind of recoil from overcivilization, in its focus on active health and wellness, was an important plank in the therapeutic world view of antimodernism.

A similar concern for well-being was manifest on a larger scale. The rise of the wilderness holiday was closely connected to trepidation among social critics in the United States, Britain, and Canada that individual cases of neurasthenia heralded the collective physical and mental degeneration or decay of their societies. This reading of events was connected to the cultural prevalence at the turn of the century of various theories about race, evolution, and biology based loosely on the work of Charles Darwin. Social Darwinism and other popular racial theories encouraged the recognition of many contemporary problems or phenomena as symptoms of racial decline. They also tended to equate the possession of "civilization"—the highest evolved form of biological and cultural humanity—with political power. The corollary was that an "overcivilized" nation of people would lose its potency and thereby its standing among other world powers.[14]

Moreover, although both men and women were diagnosed with neurasthenic disorders, the fears of critics concentrated on the young, white, and male body: that belonging to the paradigmatic citizen, and perhaps the future national leader. This gendered, class-based response has been connected to the rising power of other segments of American and Canadian societies in the early twentieth century. Women, non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, and the working classes exerted new influence through movements such as women's suffrage, the entrance of women into the workplace, temperance campaigns, mass immigration, and labour strikes. In reaction to this perceived diffusion of power, the white male elite sought to rebuild and reinvigorate its traditional political and cultural authority in a variety of ways.[15] As Christopher

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[14] Jasen, *Wild Things,* 106-7; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 20-31, 170-215. On the development of the racial discourse of civilization, see George W. Stocking Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 112-32, and Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987). On the Western reception of Darwin's ideas, see Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Finally, on degeneracy and decay, see J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander L. Gilman, eds., *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) and Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[15] In the Canadian context, scholars have linked this reassertion of hegemonic power specifically to the emergence of nationalist cultural movements, such as the paintings of the Group of Seven. See Lynda Jessup, "Prospectors, Bushwhackers, Painters: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 17 (1998): 193-214; Jessup, "Bushwhackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, 130-52; Ross D. Cameron, "Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 10 (1999): 185-208; Andrew Baldwin, "The White Geography of Lawren Stewart Harris: Whiteness and the Performative Coupling of Wilderness and Multiculturalism in Canada," *Environment and Planning A* 41 (2009): 529-44. Michael Dawson

Dummitt argues in the context of a later era, this "manly modernism" simultaneously presented the normative version of modernity as a masculine entity and reserved an antimodern space where men could escape from the social heterogeneity of modern life in order to reinvigorate their traditional masculine powers.[16]

Cultural representations of masculinity attached to Canadian soldiers serving in the First World War stressed the role of the country's wilderness in toughening the minds and bodies of men for European battlefields. The nation's archetypal soldier was conceived to be a "pure and rugged backwoodsman who lived his life far from the stultifying influence of city and university," despite the rather different composition, in reality, of the national corps. Generally, Canadian reactions to and commemorations of the war drew upon heroic Canadian figures of the past in order to place the war within a coherent national narrative.[17] Historians of the post-World War I period in Canada describe it as a conflicted time, in which this same craving to look back nostalgically on the past ran parallel with a desire to hasten a glorious future, a contradictory vision characteristic of antimodern sentiment.[18] At this time, particularly in central Canada, the masculine antimodernism described above was tinged with anti-American and pro-northern sentiments. Degeneration of the Canadian population was commonly associated with the growing evidence of American cultural influence in the country. Personal and national regeneration, then, could be accomplished through recourse to the iconic Canadian therapeutic

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has also undertaken a notable antimodern analysis of another conservative Canadian masculine icon. See Dawson, "'That Nice Red Coat Goes to My Head like Champagne': Gender, Antimodernism and the Mountie Image, 1880-1960," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1997): 119-39; Dawson, *The Mountie from Dime Novel to Disney* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1998), chapter 2.

[16] Christopher Dummitt, *The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 25. For an insightful analysis that locates these discourses of overcivilization, degeneration, and masculinity in pedagogical displays of "natural" history, see Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," in *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), 26-58.

[17] Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 159. One might recall that neither Blanchet nor Douglas served in the First World War. As a newly married man, Blanchet may have been exempt from service. Douglas applied to both the Canadian and British military corps, but was turned away from both because of his imperfect hearing. See Gwyneth Hoyle, *The Northern Horizons of Guy Blanchet, Intrepid Surveyor, 1884-1966* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2007), 162-63; Robert S. Hildebrand, foreword to *Lands Forlorn: A Story of an Expedition to Hearne's Coppermine River*, by George Douglas, ed. Robert S. Hildebrand (Tucson: Zancudo Press, 2008), xii-xiii.

[18] See, for example, W.L. Morton, "The 1920s," in *The Canadians*, *1867-1967*, vol. 1, eds. J.M.S. Careless and R.M. Brown (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), 209-210, 229; Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, *Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 199-202; Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 2; Katie Pickles, "The Old and the New on Parade: Mimesis, Queen Victoria, and Carnival Queens on Victoria Day in Interwar Victoria," in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 272-91; Jane Nicholas, "Gendering the Jubilee: Gender and Modernity in the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation Celebrations, 1927," *Canadian Historical Review* 90 (2009): 247-74, especially 248-49.

space, the North, which many thought was the source of the country's racial identity and potency.[19] This was less often the far North of the Subarctic or Arctic than the North of the Canadian Shield, which was relatively accessible to central Canadian cities.

In addition to its characterization as a primeval wilderness playground in which men could regain their lost strength and vigour, the North was also regarded as a proto-agricultural and proto-industrial landscape. It became understood as a "second" frontier, following upon the first western Canadian one, that was waiting to be developed through the labour of a new wave of Canadian pioneers for the benefit of the nation.[20] This view was strengthened by the series of mineral discoveries made throughout the near and far North in these decades, and the popular and financial enthusiasm and excitement with which these were greeted. Contemporary government policy on the North also reflected this tendency to look to the past and the future simultaneously. In the case of wildlife management, as John Sandlos has shown, federal bureaucrats combined "the antimodernist desire to preserve wildlife as the most visible remnant of an authentic but fading wilderness and the modern faith in bureaucratic management as a means to cultivate and manage wildlife populations for recreational and commercial purposes."[21]

The following discussion will focus on the backward-looking, nostalgic elements of Blanchet's and Douglas's antimodern sentiments. Yet it should be stressed that Blanchet, in his position with the federal government, and Douglas, in his series of contracts with private companies, both worked toward and believed in the development of northern resources and the prosperity that such activities would bring. In their publications of this period, they argued for careful optimism about the productive future of the modern North.[22] Their private musings confirm that they were not simply paying lip service to popular beliefs. Douglas believed that

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[19] Sherrill E. Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), chapter 2; Paul Hjartarson, "'Virgin Land,' the Settler-Invader Subject, and Cultural Nationalism: Gendered Landscape in the Cultural Construction of Canadian National Identity," in *Gender and Landscape: Renegotiating Morality and Space*, eds. Lorraine Dowler, Josephine Carubia, and Bonj Szczygiel (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 203-20; Nicholas, "Gendering the Jubilee." For the classic analysis of the racial ideology of nordicity in Canada, see Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 3-26.

[20] Nicholas, "Gendering the Jubilee."

[21] John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 11.

[22] See George M. Douglas, "Copper Deposits of Arctic Canada," *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press* 118, no. 3 (1924): 85-89; Douglas, "A Summer Journey along the Southeast Shores of Great Slave Lake," *Canadian Mining and Metallurgical Bulletin* 22 (1929): 344-60; Guy Blanchet, e.g., *Great Slave Lake Area, Northwest Territories* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1926); Blanchet, *Keewatin and Northeastern Mackenzie. A General Survey of the Life, Activities, and Natural Resources of This Section of the Northwest Territories, Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1930).

had his cousin, the American mining magnate James Douglas, sponsored him in another season of prospecting on Great Bear Lake, he might have discovered pitchblende there some fifteen years earlier than had Gilbert LaBine. Douglas, not LaBine, would have set off the largest mining boom in the North to date, one that served to halve the world price for radium in just a few years, and his cousin's company would have reaped the massive benefits of staking and development.[23] Meanwhile, Blanchet accepted a temporary position with the mining company Dominion Explorers Limited in part because they believed, as he did, in the potential of the North: "I was getting tired of being a prophet in the official wilderness and to meet a group of men who had faith in the country and asked me to help them prove it to be worthwhile—it offered a new outlet."[24]

However, Blanchet and Douglas also sought out the North precisely because they believed, in common with other southern Canadians, that civilization and industrialization had touched the region but lightly. Theirs was a desire to come to terms with modernity by seeking a pre-modern physical and psychological zone of retreat.[25] In the North, they were able to experience, for a time, important things that they felt modern life lacked, and to be rejuvenated through those very experiences.

The martial North

From 1923-26, Guy Blanchet spent part or all of his summers on the western Barrens east of Great Slave Lake as part of his work with the Topographical Survey of Canada. There he led parties of four engaged primarily in exploratory track surveys that aimed to assess, more correctly than previous surveys, the number, sizes, and shapes of the rivers and lakes surrounding the height of land dividing the Arctic Ocean and Hudson Bay watersheds.[26] Several

[23] Douglas to Stefansson, 11 June 1958, File 8, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. In 1929, the prospector and mining executive Gilbert LaBine, during a flight in the Great Bear Lake region, had spotted indications of silver in the landscape below. He returned in the spring of 1930 to inspect the area on foot, and discovered silver-pitchblende occurrences, which agents from his mine subsequently staked. Pitchblende contains high contents of both uranium and radium, and its value in the interwar period sparked a rush in 1932, once news of LaBine's find had spread. Eldorado, LaBine's corporation, developed the most advanced radium extraction plant in the world at that time. The Canadian government expropriated the plant in 1942 as vital to the war effort, and turned it into a Crown corporation. Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 181-82.

[24] Blanchet, 26 November 1928, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928-29, File 7, Box 3, Guy Houghton Blanchet fonds, MS 0498, British Columbia Archives (hereafter cited as BCA).

[25] Jessup, "Introduction," 4.

[26] He also made one control survey in 1924, based on his exploratory survey of the previous year, of a chain of lakes (Artillery, Ptarmigan, Clinton-Colden, Aylmer, and Outram) north and east of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake. Blanchet had spent the summer seasons of 1921-23 leading the first control survey of Great Slave Lake,

years later, he was seconded from his position with the Topographical Survey in order to become coordinator of operations for Dominion Explorers' new program of aerial exploration. Blanchet worked at their base at Tavane, on the west coast of Hudson Bay, during the season of 1928-29. Detailed personal journals from all but his 1923 trip are extant, and take the form of separate or continuous letters to his wife, Eileen. Their pages overflow with observations, exultations, complaints, speculations, dissertations, flights of fancy, and heartfelt love letters. Together with the many articles, several pamphlets, and one book that Blanchet published based on his fieldwork in this decade, the diaries contain several strains of antimodernism that reflect wider cultural discourses about masculinity, savagery, and civilization evident in early twentieth-century Canada and the United States.[27]

From the late nineteenth century onward, hegemonic ideals of masculinity in North American culture took on a physically active, vigorous, even martial character.[28] Specific permutations of this movement included a generally increased emphasis on physical fitness, athletics, and team sports; the appearance of paramilitary organizations and summer camps and the increase in adventure novels, all of which were intended to instill appropriate masculine qualities in boys; a new appetite in the United States for overseas imperial endeavours; the celebration of so-called "savage" or "primitive" cultures and the adoption of certain of their qualities; and, as already noted, the back-to-nature movement. The figurehead of this movement was the American president Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt, whose call for a

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in which his team of surveyors corrected many of the errors of previous maps and presented a cartographic result that differed significantly from previous representations.

[27] The following discussion will draw substantially on Lears's observations, which, as has already been noted, pertain to a different geographical and temporal population. The decision to apply these insights to Blanchet's and, to a lesser extent, Douglas's experiences has been taken on several grounds. Both men were already middle-aged by the early 1920s, so they would likely have encountered these turn-of-the-century discourses in their early adulthood. Furthermore, they lived in the portion of Canada where similarities with the Eastern Seaboard in the United States have been noted in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cultural discourses relating to masculinity, militarism, and the back-to-nature movement. See Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada, 2001), vii; Altmeyer, "Three Ideas," 104. Finally, Lears (*No Place of Grace,* xvii) posits that the antimodern sentiments of his dramatis personae later became common in wider society—indeed, some of Blanchet's responses are nearly identical to the ones that Lears chronicles. This synchronicity suggests that certain trends of antimodern thought and feeling may have been both well dispersed and long felt throughout Canadian and American society. On this last point, see also Sharon Wall, "Totem Poles, Teepees, and Token Traditions: 'Playing Indian' at Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-1955," *Canadian Historical Review* 86 (2005): 543-44.

[28] The growing scholarly interest in masculinities has prompted much study of this cultural shift. See, for example, J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*; Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Moss, *Manliness and Militarism*; John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), chapter 2.

"strenuous life" in the 1890s became synonymous with any kind of virile, manly endeavour, and at the same time antithetical to the overcivilized effeminacy thought to pervade North American culture. Blanchet's journals reflect many of these concerns regarding civilization and chronicle his adopted solution: an active and "natural" masculinity, entwined with antimodern sentiment, which was meant to counteract the banes of modern life. His responses took the form of a reification of certain bodily signifiers of masculinity, a martial engagement with the landscape, the elevation of the "primitive" life over that of "civilized," urban society, and the revitalization of his mental and sensory abilities. Less happily, there came also doubt about the greater meaning of his efforts in the field.

Over these arduous summers of travel, Blanchet gloried in the strengthening of his frame, particularly the conversion of fat into muscle. "I was feeling myself last night to see if I was losing my fat and I think all the soft stuff has gone," he wrote, not long into their travels in 1924.[29] By the end of these seasons, he often felt in top physical condition: "I don't think I ever felt more fit in my life. Lean and my muscles working smoothly...."[30] While the leanness of his middle-aged body in the field prompted positive comparisons with youthful vigour, Blanchet deplored the gaining of weight that accompanied the much more sedate pace of life at Tavane in the winter of 1928-29. He implicitly linked a softer version of his body with the comforts of civilization, and indicated that he preferred being "flat + lean as a boy."[31] Another masculine prerogative of the field was the ability to grow a thick beard. Blanchet faithfully reported its development throughout the summer of 1924, and seemed to associate it with power, as evident in his somewhat tongue-in-cheek descriptions of it having attained various ranks of nobility: "I must say though I think the whiskers becoming. They look more like a baron than a count now and am in hopes of their resembling an earl yet."[32] Finally, Blanchet's short, compact figure rendered him peculiarly fit for an iconic display of strength in the North—the ability to pack heavy loads over portages using a "tump line" anchored around one's forehead. While

[29] Blanchet, [11] July 1924, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, Box 5, MS 0498, BCA. Square brackets indicate an insertion or correction of the date as originally omitted or given in the manuscript journals.
[30] Blanchet, 16 August 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 28-August 19, File 3, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[31] Blanchet, 18 July 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, July 1-July 23, File 5, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA. On Blanchet's winter weight gain, see, e.g., 11 November 1928 and May 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers 1928-29, File 7, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[32] Blanchet, 22 August 1924, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, Box 5, MS 0498, BCA. In describing these bodily transformations, Blanchet may have also wanted to emphasize his newly attractive masculinity to his wife, to whom his diaries were ultimately addressed. I thank Andrew Stuhl for suggesting this interpretation.

Douglas reckoned conservatively that the average man could stand 70-pound loads, Blanchet regularly took 120-pound loads, and could pack 140 pounds over half a mile.[33]

A connected and no less consistent theme in Blanchet's summer journals is the sheer force with which he confronted the northern landscape. This was no mere rehearsal of the well-worn rhetoric of strong and conquering penetration favoured by imperial adventurers and colonial governors worldwide, and not a few of the mining executives with whom Blanchet came into contact.[34] The task given to Blanchet of clarifying the headwaters of the Arctic and Hudson Bay watersheds involved a great deal of heavy portaging between innumerable small lakes and rivers over boggy ground. The exigencies of the landscape necessitated recourse to the lighter outfit of older days—the canoe, paddle, and tump line—rather than the large gasoline-powered boats, towing scows full of supplies, more common to that era. Every year, his journal uses explicitly martial language to describe the preparation and execution of his fieldwork. Once both animate bodies and inanimate equipment had been trimmed down to "fighting weight," they journeyed through country that he characterized as recalcitrant, particularly at the watershed, where rivers could flow in a confusing variety of directions.[35] "We have been fighting this height of land hard and getting so little for it and failure would be so awfully disappointing," he wrote on one frustrated night.[36] However, he greatly enjoyed strenuous travel, and gained ample satisfaction from being able to find his way through such difficult landscapes. Looking back on his 1926 trip, "a hard one through difficult country," he averred that "we fought it without regard to obstacles." He believed in the providentially ordained outcome of this approach, such that "if you fight a thing hard enough, you have to get through."[37]

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[33] George M. Douglas, *Lands Forlorn: A Story of an Expedition to Hearne's Coppermine River* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), 194-95; Blanchet, 13 June 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, June 7-June 30, File 4, Box 3; Blanchet, 20 July 1926, Dubawnt journal, July 1-July 23, File 5, Box 3; both MS 0498, BCA. The last entry admits difficulty with the top figure: "I sometimes load foolishly. I took about 140 [pounds] over a portage of half a mile and my neck nearly collapsed before I got there."

[34] Writing of a conference with several of Dominion Explorers' executives in June 1929, Blanchet recalled, "The talk was big and we ran our fingers across the map in a reckless fashion. Sweeping across the arctic and projecting a railway—and it may all be done. The power behind it is big enough to go after anything worthwhile." 29 June 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers 1928-29, File 7, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA. A later entry gives a better idea of Blanchet's usual response to this kind of grandstanding: "[N]o human ingenuity can change the workings of Nature or ignore them—not even the man with the gold. In a way I like to see [the chief of Dominion Explorers] meet a situation or opponent that money can not buy. It is a good lesson. For us out here it is different we must meet it with our wits and take the chances of battle if we decide to fight." Blanchet, 13 July 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers 1928-29, File 7, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.

[35] Blanchet, [16] June 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1925, June 7-June 30, File 4, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.

[36] Blanchet, [16] July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 15-July 26, File 2, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.

[37] Blanchet, [13] July 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, July 1-July 23, File 5, Box 3; Blanchet, 19 July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 15-July 26, File 2, Box 3; both MS 0498, BCA.

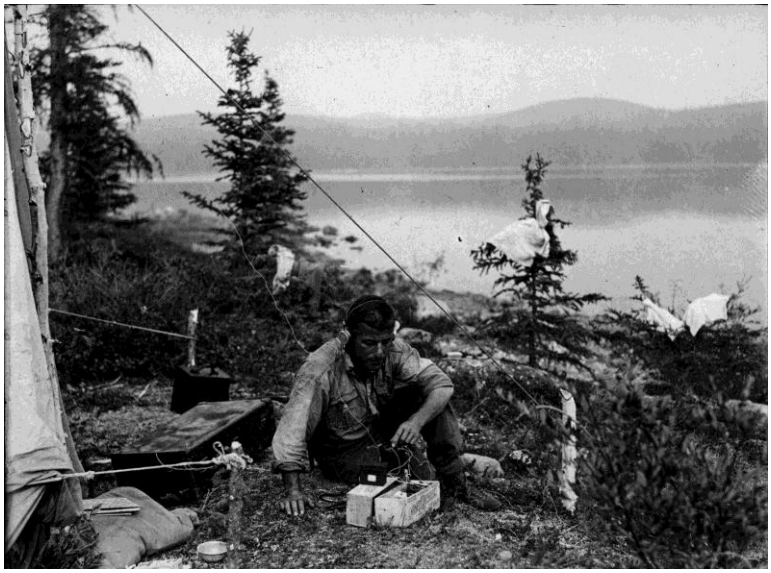

Figure 2.1. Blanchet using a wireless radio to take an observation of his position during one of the summers he spent in the Barrens. In one album, he captioned this photograph: "No place was too remote for our little wireless to reach civilization." Credit: British Columbia Archives / I-68458.

In undertaking this work, which doubled as a kind of leisure, Blanchet was, like many men of his era, fulfilling a deep-seated need for manly testing that the quotidian modern world seemed no longer to offer. One strand of antimodernism, in reaction to this civilized ennui, exhorted a martial, activist cult of experience, often identified with outdoor exercise. Participation in this ideal acted as an antidote to excessive mental work and provided a taste of preindustrial vigour without sacrificing the benefits of industrial progress.[38] In Canada, as noted above, the northern wilderness was the paradigmatic topos in which to realize the strenuous life. The more immersed Blanchet became in his travels through this space, the less appealing, even right, did aspects of his normal, civilized life appear.[39] Finding a quarter in his pocket one day, he thought "what a colossal myth is built about money. With it one loses the power of working out life for himself."[40] He echoed the concerns of critics of overcivilization in decrying the negative effects of office work and urban habitation. Remembering his office in the Topographical Survey from his small house at Tavane, the former became a small, petty, and loathsome place. Life in Ottawa likewise seemed confining and constraining: "I can only stand so

[38] Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 98, 108, 118, 138.
[39] "Life of crowds and cities and machine tasks gets more and more remote and one can view it in better perspective from the primitive life here and I can't help judging it to be wrong. Value is often placed on the wrong things and there is a lack of balance and fair play and fair distribution of work and rewards and happiness." Blanchet, 29 June 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, June 24-July 9, File 1, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[40] Blanchet, 22 July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 15-July 26, File 2, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.

much of it and then would burst in some way if I didn't get out."[41] By contrast, life in the field was "a life for a man everyday a fight and always facing decisions."[42]

If Blanchet's comments are interpreted in an antimodern light, the mention of decisiveness is not incidental. A prominent fear connected to overcivilization was that individual causal potency had diminished with the social interdependence of modern life; one seemed less able to influence one's personal destiny. In defence of individual autonomy, activist antimodernism celebrated the ability to act decisively.[43] Not coincidentally, decisiveness also formed the basis of Blanchet's guiding maxim of northern fieldwork: "Make up your mind. Don't stand on one foot: do whatever you think best, but *do* it."[44] This stress on active mental engagement can also be traced back to the core driver of antimodernist sentiment, which was the longing for regeneration through intense physical and mental experience. Indeed, the two kinds of challenge were linked:

> In spite of all that goes to make up this life it is a good one. You enter soft finicky loving ease + pleasant things and for a while it pounds and bruises you but you emerge with muscles + nerves steeled with the primitive capacity of being able to meet and conquer your difficulties instead of passing them on to some paid agency.[45]

Not only Blanchet's body, but also his mind found a welcome challenge in "stepping off the map" each summer.[46] This phrase, some variant of which was repeated most summers near the beginning of his journals, seems to have symbolized his entry into what he considered "unknown"—which was also, in an antimodern sense, mentally therapeutic—northern space. Blanchet's journals often contrasted "known" and "unknown" space, invariably favouring the latter. Travelling familiar roads produced lethargy rather than contentment. Mental alertness, by contrast, was linked to the traverse of unknown spaces: "It is life after all when you leave the beaten paths and eddys and strike out into any new thing physical mental or moral."[47] In contrast to the dulling of sensation and emotion that living among the crowds in cities produced, his northern fieldwork rendered him newly observant and sensitive, Blanchet

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[41] Blanchet, 27 December 1928, 30 March 1929, May 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928-29, File 7, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[42] Blanchet, [11] July 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, July 1-July 23, File 5, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[43] Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 34, 57.
[44] Guy Blanchet, *Search in the North* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960), 172.
[45] Blanchet, 23 July 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, July 1-July 23, File 5, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[46] Blanchet, 24 June 1925, Talston journal, 1925, June 24-July 9, File 1, Box 3; Blanchet, 16 June 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, June 17-June 30, File 4, Box 3; both MS 0498, BCA.
[47] Blanchet, 29 July 1924, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, Box 5; Blanchet, 26 June 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, June 7-June 30, File 4, Box 3; both MS 0498, BCA.

considered. He relished the great interest of seeing and studying new things inherent to such travail, as well as the possibility of discovering something completely unknown to his society.[48]

Yet the dark side of these regenerative actions haunted him as much as it did others on antimodern quests. Manly tests increasingly seemed to take place in a moral void, like heroic acts to no larger purpose. The therapeutic world view stressed the process of experience rather than its goal or result.[49] To connect antimodernism with exploration once more, Blanchet and Douglas, along with many explorers, were likewise concerned with precisely *how* their fieldwork was conducted. Nevertheless, it may seem incredible that Blanchet worried over the results of his journeys, given his well-specified, long-term mission to survey progressively more of the Barren Lands each summer. Reasons for doing so proliferated in his publications: to verify Canadian knowledge of basic geographical and topographical features, to clarify routes of travel for future use or to uncover those used in the past, to assess the potential for the development of various animal, plant, and mineral resources therein, or even simply to confirm that a region had no potential for development at the present time.[50]

Although he reminded himself in his journals that any certain knowledge of such lands was a boon, he still mused about his work's larger significance: "There are some of my trips that demanded all you could give.... I wonder if it was worthwhile. One cannot tell. Personally yes but otherwise I don't know."[51] Such statements might be dismissed as the product of momentary fatigue or doubt, but they are both intelligible and illuminating within an antimodern context. As Blanchet and many others discovered, the cult of martial experience often led to a circular and self-defeating quest for intense experience, and ultimately an adjustment to, rather than a transcending of, the secular culture of consumption.[52] The quarter in his pocket was a greater weight than he may have liked to admit.

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[48] Blanchet, 6 and 7 June 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928-29, File 7, Box 3; Blanchet, 12 and [26] July 1924, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, Box 5; both MS 0498, BCA.

[49] Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 138, 143. See also Paul Zweig, *The Adventurer* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1974), 237.

[50] See especially Blanchet, "An Exploration into the Northern Plains North and East of Great Slave Lake, Including the Source of the Coppermine River," *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 38 (1924): 183-87 and 39 (1925): 12-16, 30-34, 52-54; Blanchet, "'Barren Lands' Geography," *Journal of the Dominion Land Surveyors Association* 1 (1925): 4-7; Blanchet, *Great Slave Lake Area*.

[51] Blanchet, 11 January 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928-29, File 7, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.

[52] Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 138.

The primitive North

Embedded also within these active, martial, and masculine ideas were those of a related notion: that of the primitive, or "Indian," to recall Douglas's appellation of his friend. The primitivist discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contained many miscellaneous and contradictory tropes that could be employed to express a variety of things about native peoples real and imaginary, past and present. As will be seen, Blanchet simultaneously sought to acquire and emulate aspects of aboriginal culture and knowledge whilst maintaining that its people were doomed to degeneration, and he was not alone in holding such competing views of native life. His doubts regarding the necessarily positive nature of progress, along with his perceptions of the dangers of overcivilization, led him, as it did many others in the early twentieth century, to play at being an Indian while in the North.[53] As Robert Berkhofer notes, the impulse to critique white civilization often constitutes the main motive for the "Indian" created in imagination or ideology.[54] By temporarily inhabiting what he dreamt to be the skin of the Other, Blanchet was able to jettison the aspects of civilization he disliked. At the same time, following the classic arc of antimodern feeling, he could draw upon the aspects of primitive culture that appealed to him in order to regenerate his body and spirit.

However, Blanchet located most of these admirable traits in the lives and cultures of historical northern aboriginals, whom he distinguished from their physically and morally degenerate descendants of the present day. Like many of his southern Canadian contemporaries with some experience of northern life, Blanchet considered that natives of that region had fallen prey to the comforts of civilized life at the fur trade posts. As trappers dependent on southern goods and prices, they seemed mere shadows of the independent and virile hunters they had been in former days. Moreover, the notion of the physically or culturally vanishing Indian was the predominant non-indigenous interpretation of indigenous peoples on the North American continent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[55] Considering Blanchet's avid self-identification with primitive peoples, it was both ironic and

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[53] On the phenomenon of playing Indian or going Native, see Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998); Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Wall, "Totem Poles, Teepees."

[54] Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 71.

[55] Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 23, 38. See also Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

rather fitting that, before the end of the interwar period, he came to be regarded, and to regard himself, as one of a vanishing breed, too: of heroic northern explorers in the pre-industrial age.

Looking at Blanchet's exploratory practices in the long term, it is evident that his Barren Land surveys of the 1920s gave him both the inspiration and the opportunity to incorporate some self-consciously primitive aspects into his conduct of fieldwork, which changed in character as a result. By the middle of the decade, Blanchet had developed a "hard" style of northern travel, a significant feature of which was the evanescence of his outfit. He presented this choice as both localized and normative in a 1926 article published in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*: "There is a general principle when travelling in the North that the less baggage you have, the farther you may go. Moreover, if you know the country and where and how to hunt and fish, there is not much danger of shortage in summer, when living off the country. ... If one wishes to go far, he must go light."[56] Before departing for the summer, Blanchet would cut and recut items from his slim list of supplies: "The final trimming of the cargo, in clearing the paddling places [in their canoe], generally resulted in the sacrifice of a sack of flour or bacon."[57] Blanchet's journals also reveal that he would shed food along the trail if the indications of game in an area looked good and if he wished to lessen the number of time-consuming portages necessary to move across the country.[58]

If the way ahead looked too uncertain to risk the strain and time of portaging everything they carried, Blanchet would erect a base camp at which he would leave half of the party with most of their equipment and provisions. With one other man, he would strike off cross-country for a number of days with minimal goods—pemmican, tea, a rifle, fishing tackle and net, blankets, and a folding canvas canoe—in the hope of finding clearer indications of where they were and which way they needed to go. This kind of scouting involved a certain amount of survival on low rations, if not outright starving, if they were unable to supplement their meagre rations with caribou or fish. However, Blanchet's luck in finding game held throughout these summers, and he was able to look back on "blue" or starving periods with fondness: "Home again in the base camp after 11 days of wandering on 4 days grub after all in retrospect I find we were very lucky and lived well. We ... had no hard times and fish came at the critical times."[59]

Blanchet affected a disinterest in food generally while he was in the field, presumably related to his desire for a slim physique. The only relish he obtained in gustatory matters was

[56] Blanchet, "New Light on Forgotten Trails in the Northwest," *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 40 (1926): 71-72.
[57] Ibid., 71.
[58] Blanchet, 6 July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, June 24-July 9, File 1, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[59] Blanchet, 26 July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 15-July 26, File 2, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.

the sense of achievement that accompanied the active, martial filling of the meat pot.[60] He even went so far as to flirt mentally with the notion of starvation: "I really in the back of my mind wouldn't mind if we had to starve a little to see what the mental reaction would be."[61] In this thought, Blanchet mirrored the intrigue of martial antimodernists with ideas of pain and suffering, which they considered had been largely excised from modern life through analgesic advances in medicine. Encounters with these states of being were yet another way of warding off overcivilization; they proved that the modern body could still handle and overcome physical adversity.[62] In this vein, Blanchet admitted that strangely, he loved travel most when it was studded with hardship: "I like better to suffer on the trail for the interest of it."[63]

Blanchet's chaste attitude toward provisioning in the 1920s contrasted greatly with his practices of the prior fifteen years, during which he had supervised large baseline survey parties in the northern prairie provinces and the subarctic Northwest Territories. As chief of operations, he had been responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of food for his large teams of fieldworkers and for organizing its transport in good time from trading posts to pre-arranged depots along their trajectory of travel.[64] His work in the Barrens was undertaken with far fewer men; this fact, combined with the relative freedom of exploratory surveys as compared to boundary survey and meridian line work, may have been partially responsible for the alteration of his practices. Arguably the greatest factor in this shift, however, was Blanchet's first foray into the Barren Grounds with two Chipewyan men, Jose "Souci" Beaulieu and "Black" Basile, in the late summer of 1923.[65] Although Blanchet had often travelled with indigenous guides in his

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[60] Blanchet, 18 July 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, July 1-July 23, File 5, Box 3; Blanchet, "The Exploration of the Plateau," in "Beyond the Ranges," unpublished MS, Box 9; both MS 0498, BCA.

[61] Blanchet, 24 June 1925, Talston journal, 1925, June 24-July 9, File 1, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.

[62] Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 44-45, 118, 121-22.

[63] Blanchet, 28 and 30 January 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928-29, Box 5, MS 0498, BCA. Interestingly, Blanchet continues, "I wonder if I shall ever grow out of [this attitude] and what I'd be like then!" His link between hard experiences and childish sentiments is noteworthy. Antimodern thought of a primitivist bent often imbued childhood with a particular vitality and capacity for intense experience to the point where it partook of some of the qualities of the cult of strenuosity. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 145-46.

[64] Blanchet, "Beyond the Ranges," unpublished MS, 56-57, 75-76, Box 9, MS 0498, BCA. In what may be read as a foreshadowing of his later attitude, even as a young survey chief, he was at first shocked by the amount of food required in the field.

[65] Beaulieu came from a prominent Métis family whose history, entwined with preceding generations of non-indigenous northern travellers, offers "an alternative view of northern exploration," according to Enid Mallory. His grandfather, François Beaulieu, had advised John Franklin in his overland travels of the 1820s and hunted for his party. His father, King Beaulieu, had guided the British adventurer Warburton Pike on his travels through the North in the 1890s, and considered Pike the "worst goddamned liar I ever knew," as he told P.G. Downes. Souci had also guided Pike as a young man, and he would later guide Blanchet as an old man. Douglas became friends with Souci's brother, Paul Beaulieu, during his trips north in the 1930s. Mallory contends that this friendship had a significant effect on Douglas, whose negative views of the northern Dene people softened

surveys of the northern prairies, this particular encounter seems to have had an important effect on his subsequent travels in the Barrens, which were, by contrast, largely independent of native assistance. More a reconnaissance trip than an exploratory survey proper, the experience gave him a model of the primitive past to follow in subsequent journeys and revealed to him the "decay" that contact with civilization had effected in the Chipewyan population that frequented the Barrens.

Blanchet told the story of their encounter as follows: he had been preparing for the journey by laying out what he considered minimum supplies for a month when Souci halted him.[66] "What for we carry store food to country where meat abounds?" he reportedly exclaimed. Blanchet came to agree: "At least we should experience life there as did the Indians in the old days. As with them, it might be feasting or there might be times of famine." Their party had both times of plenty, when gratuitous and savagely uncontrolled acts of caribou hunting and eating abounded, and of scarcity, when, in three days' travel, they were only able to catch two fish for a meal. Significantly, Souci and Basile were both older men. When Blanchet had inquired after younger guides, the fort manager at Resolution had replied that the young men had no knowledge of the country and preferred to loaf in the settlement during the summer. Blanchet's companions were presented as relics of a former age when Chipewyan families had travelled more widely over the Barrens to hunt not only the caribou, but the rarer and more elusive muskox as well. Their journey that summer was portrayed as a last, sentimental visit to the land of Souci's and Basile's youthful days, "across the old forgotten hunting grounds of the people where the tent stones of the encampment were almost buried in moss." Similar themes of romanticized, ancient indigeneity and the degeneracy of present-day natives would appear throughout the journals and published narratives based on the following three years of Blanchet's fieldwork in the Barrens.

In 1922, Blanchet had first seen the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, through which he would subsequently pass to gain the Barrens. He came to frame it as a portal to a primitive

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dramatically after his conversations with this reportedly remarkable man. See Enid Mallory, *Coppermine: The Far North of George M. Douglas* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1989), chapter 18.

[66] The following account is based on Blanchet, "Exploring with Sousi and Black Basile," *The Beaver*, Outfit 295 (Autumn 1964): 34-41. The only contemporary account of this expedition is a short unpublished report that Blanchet submitted to his superiors. It says almost nothing of his indigenous guides, terming them simply "two old men." See Blanchet, "Report on the Country North and East of Great Slave Lake," unpublished MS, Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1924. The earliest published accounts of Blanchet's personal experiences on this trip evince the attitudes toward historical and present-day indigenes that are discussed above. See Blanchet, "In the Land of the Muskox," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 8 (1934): 249-58; Blanchet, "The Caribou of the Barren Grounds," *The Beaver*, Outfit 267, no. 2 (1936): 22-25, 66.

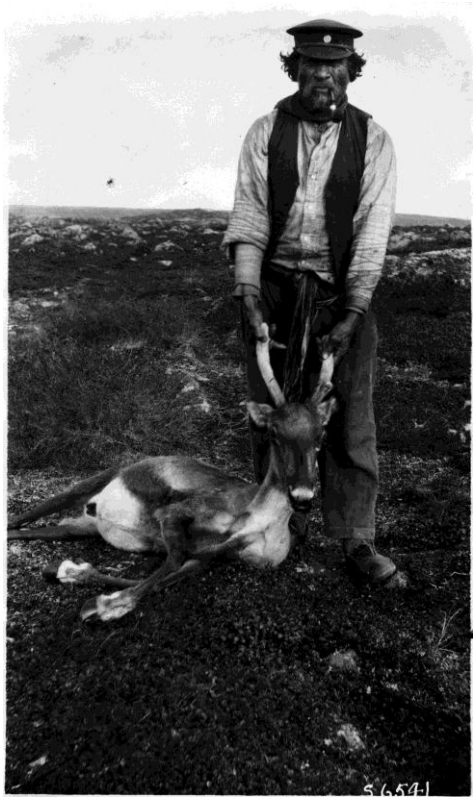

Figure 2.2. "Souci" Beaulieu on the Barrens in 1923. Credit: British Columbia Archives / I-68474.

world through which their old-fashioned outfit journeyed into the past.[67] Even the natural environment, mirroring the traits of the humans who lived there, appeared to Blanchet in the "early stages of natural development."[68] This stress on the long ago and far away was a key element of primitivist discourse. One of the characteristic ways in which Blanchet deployed this theme was in his constant observation of traces, both ancient and recent, of indigenous people in the landscape. These relics—old teepee poles and stones, arrowheads, spearheads, piles of kindling, scraped caribou bones—signified the permanently anterior nature of the landscape, in which lives had been most vigorously lived in the distant past. From this scant evidence, Blanchet fashioned, in his mind's eye, possible actions for these ghosts:

> The trail of the people becomes fainter and fainter ... at one portage their trail was made very human by finding a toy boat whittled out of a stick and one pictured some little brown tot caribou grease to the ears sailing it in the eddy below the falls much as Christopher Robin might be sailing his in the Serpentine. And another place—a winter camp of long ago where they made canoes for the

[67] Blanchet, "Narrative of a Journey to the Source of the Coppermine River," *Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Philadelphia* 24 (1926): 168; Blanchet, "Mackenzie and Great Slave Lake Explorations," in "These Fifty Years," unpublished MS, Box 10, MS 0498, BCA.
[68] Blanchet, *Great Slave Lake Area*, 35.

> spring caribou hunt—I saw where the comely squaw of one of the tribes had got a scolding for leaving her awl mounted in a piece of caribou horn.[69]

By imagining this environment as a natural and human exemplar of the primitive past, Blanchet was able to indulge his own primitivist wishes to live and travel in such an era and fashion. Not only was he vigilant about recording the remains of old campsites and hunting passes that they encountered, but he also chose sometimes to camp at those same places. In motions imbued with practical and romantic sentiment, he retraced and re-enacted their journeys over portages and routes, both those still frequented at that time and those that had fallen into disuse. At times, he identified very closely with the people who had left their marks across the land. One afternoon in the summer of 1925, having shot a moose that he subsequently butchered and hung to dry in native fashion on wooden racks, Blanchet broached their party's similarity to a "party of Indians," and reflected on the joys of living the "Indian life."[70]

These traces, however, were not evenly distributed across the land of Blanchet's travels, and their pattern gave rise to social and moral judgments. As they travelled further and further into the heart of the Barrens, recent signs of aboriginal life gave way to much older traces of the activities of people long dead. Blanchet certainly read these objects, especially those perched on the cusp of the old muskox hunting ranges, as evidence of "the old days when the men were more hardy and adventurous."[71] He interpreted the withdrawal of present-day Chipewyans from their former hunting grounds and their loss of knowledge of the geography of those regions as a mark of their decline.[72] This assessment seemed to be confirmed by his interactions with the indigenous people whom he did meet. At the end of July 1925, his party encountered two large families within one day, travelling east to meet the caribou migration. When he asked them for information about the country in that direction, the young men of the group could give no reply. An elderly woman named Soongo, however, became very excited, and indicated that she knew that area well. She could even describe it recognizably, as she had travelled there as a young girl. An elderly man in the second group of people was similarly well-informed on the

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[69] Blanchet, 4 July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, June 24-July 9, File 1, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[70] Blanchet, 28 July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 28-Aug 19, File 3, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[71] Blanchet, 24 July 1924, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, Box 5, MS 0498, BCA.
[72] That the settlement patterns of the Chipewyan had changed since the eighteenth century was, at least, correct. Several factors had combined to draw Chipewyan peoples away from their traditional hunting territories on the Barrens to more southerly and forested lands. These included the greater preponderance of both fur-bearers and fur traders in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and the later settlement of treaties with the Canadian government that granted Chipewyan families reserves and hunting territories south of the sixtieth parallel. See James G.E. Smith, "Chipewyan," in *Handbook of North American Indians*. *Volume 6: Subarctic*, ed. June Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 271-84.

country. Blanchet concluded that "the old and blind among the Indians have had more varied experiences, as their lives reach back to the primitive adventurous life of their people, and in thinking over the travel of their early days they keep these routes and landmarks fresh in their minds."[73]

Variations on the same bleak assessment of the Barren Ground Chipewyans' present-day state run throughout his publications of the 1920s. They are presented not only as barely apprised, if that, of various kinds of knowledge about the regions they inhabit, but also as fearful of the dangers that lurked there, such as starvation, disappearance, supernatural creatures, or conflict with Inuit peoples.[74] Their withdrawal from the Barrens, Blanchet proposed, meant that "life has become for them simpler and more secure, but the change has been accompanied by a certain physical and moral decay. They lack the courage to attempt a long and difficult trip and the stamina to accomplish it."[75] With such statements, Blanchet used the Chipewyans as foils for his own active, martial engagement with their traditional territory. Whereas the Chipewyans, in Blanchet's perception, always selected the easiest route of travel, magnified small obstacles, and could hardly conceive of steady, persistent effort, his own arduous ethics of work and travel, his choice of challenging, sometimes little-travelled routes, and his overall knowledge of the landscape rendered him, it is implied, more "Indian" than the present-day natives themselves.[76]

Essentially, Blanchet seems to have projected his own fears about the effects of civilization onto the natives he met, perhaps without consciously realizing that he was doing so. His ability to treat their traditional lands as a space of primitive fantasy and play was itself a privilege of the white dominance therein.[77] It is well to acknowledge, as Blanchet's biographer does, that Blanchet took an avid interest in the history and culture of northern aboriginal peoples, and that he enjoyed their company, even preferring it to that of non-indigenous men.[78] But his writings, in reflecting the sentiments of and contributing to then-current discourses of primitivism and indigeneity, also served to confirm the subordinate position of the Chipewyans in the colonial order of the early twentieth-century Canadian North. In a period of reflection

[73] Blanchet, "In the Land of the 'Caribou Eaters': An Exploration into the Country Southeast of Great Slave Lake," pt. 2, *Saturday Night,* n.d., File 2, Box 16, MS 0498, BCA.
[74] Blanchet, "New Light on Forgotten Trails," 71; Blanchet, "In the Land of the 'Caribou Eaters,'" pts. 1 and 2.
[75] Blanchet, "An Exploration into the Northern Plains," 186; Blanchet, *Great Slave Lake Area*, 39.
[76] Blanchet, "In the Land of the 'Caribou Eaters,'" pt. 1; Blanchet, "New Light on Forgotten Trails," 71.
[77] Huhndorf, *Going Native,* 21; Jasen, *Wild Things*, 152.
[78] Hoyle, *Northern Horizons*, 49, 62, 68, 156.

later in his life, Blanchet seemed to realize that he had used his travels on the Barrens to satiate his desire for a primitive, indigenous world out of time.[79]

Whether or not one believes that Blanchet deserved comeuppance for espousing what were common beliefs of his time, the respect accorded to his difficult, overtly masculine and primitive travels waned rather quickly with the rise of new technologies of travel in the North. Suddenly there was no need to undergo such trials in order to gain knowledge of remote territories.[80] Aerial surveying could easily produce the requisite information either in sketched cartographic or photographic form. The continued use of older methods would have been regarded as unnecessarily, even risibly antiquated when airplanes were available to assist fieldworkers. With this weakening of what Bruce Hevly terms the authority of adventurous observation, Blanchet's fondness for older methods made him obsolete.[81] As early as 1929, he had felt himself set apart from a new generation of arctic fieldworkers, the young Euro-Canadian men of the newly industrial and airborne age who surrounded him at Tavane. Their easy acceptance of their own dependence on machines would, he believed, lead to the same kind of physical and mental decay that he had always fled to the North to escape and to combat: "Some of my trips ... demanded all you could give that the youths of today would not attempt without the moral support of gasoline."[82]

His disillusionment with this new arctic order is evident in a series of reminiscing articles he wrote in the late 1930s while working in a full-time desk job at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria, British Columbia. Acknowledging the "new day of opportunity" that modern forms of transport had bequeathed the North by annihilating obstacles to travel, he lamented "the inevitable loss—the passing of the simpler, sturdier life when men met the wilderness and conquered it by strength and skill and courage."[83] Blanchet had, against his will, been cast as anterior in the modern world of the North. His new position, not of his own making, lay uncomfortably close to that of the old, powerless Indians he had once decried.

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[79] Ibid., 156.

[80] The new era also brought an enforced change to the provisioning practices of those travellers, like Blanchet, who depended on the country for part or all of their food. In 1932, the federal laws pertaining to hunting and trapping in the Northwest Territories were tightened such that only that those who had resided in the region for more than four years were permitted to kill game for food. Even then, restrictions abounded as to the season of hunting and the type and amount of animals that could be legally killed. For a detailed history of these legislative changes as they pertained to caribou, which were the main source of subsistence on the Barrens, see Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin*, chapter 6.

[81] Bruce Hevly, "The Heroic Science of Glacier Motion," *Osiris* 11 (1996): 66-86.

[82] Blanchet, 11 January 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928-29, File 7, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.

[83] Blanchet, "The Last of the Brigades," *The Beaver,* Outfit 268, no. 4 (1938): 12. See also Blanchet, "Pioneer Surveys," *The Beaver,* Outfit 269, no. 2 (1938): 44-47.

Perhaps in recognition of this fact, he gave to the lips of elderly aboriginal men who had once been muskox hunters his own wistful sentiments about a time that had passed. These characters are seen to forget the hardships of their journeys. Instead, they remember their accomplishments, won through hard struggle, with pride—a theme that often surfaces in Blanchet's journals.[84] Similarly, his old men deplore the degeneration of present-day youth as compared with the young men they had been, saying, "We were men in those days."

This statement obviously resonated deeply with Blanchet, as it appears verbatim a number of times in his published and unpublished writings right up until the end of his life.[85] It combines his continued belief in the necessity of an activist and martial masculinity to ward off overcivilization with the sense that increasingly, this fight was being lost or, worse, not even being taken up by his successors in arctic fieldwork. The effects of overcivilization that Blanchet had feared and had tried to stave off throughout the 1920s seemed to have come to the Euro-Canadian population as well as the indigenous population of the North at last. As if in revolt, he continued to adhere to his arduous methods of fieldwork long after most northern travellers had abandoned them. This decision would eventually bring some ridicule upon his head.[86]

In focusing so strongly upon the aspects of Blanchet's northern travels of the 1920s most sympathetic to antimodern discourses, there is the danger that he may emerge from this analysis as a hypermasculine caricature. This would be a grave injustice to his character. Nor would it reflect the insights of recent scholarship, which asserts that issues of gender are dynamic, relational, and essential elements of discourses of masculinity and of primitivism.[87] There was indeed another important gendered element to Blanchet's northern experiences. His activities in the North permitted him to test and exercise his full physical and mental capabilities, but the core of his strength came from the love he felt for his wife. To her his journals and letters were addressed, and to her Blanchet attributed all of his successes in the field.[88] He claimed the headwaters of northern rivers in her name and affected the bringing

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[84] See, for example, Blanchet, 13 and 25 August 1924, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, Box 5; Blanchet, 21 June 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, June 7-June 30, File 4, Box 3; Blanchet, [21] July 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, July 1-July 23, File 5, Box 3; all MS 0498, BCA. See also Blanchet to Douglas, 29 January 1950, File 6, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC.

[85] Blanchet, "In the Land of the Muskox," 256; Blanchet, "Caribou of the Barren Grounds," 65; Blanchet, "The Last of the Brigades," 17; Blanchet to Douglas, 7 August 1957, File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.

[86] Finnie to Douglas, 9 December 1942, File 1, Volume 7, Richard Sterling Finnie fonds, MG31 C6, LAC.

[87] This assertion is a mainstay in the literature on masculinities (for which see fn28 above). For an equivalent statement regarding primitivism, see Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, 17.

[88] Blanchet, 22 July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 15-July 26, File 2, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA. Written across the title page of Blanchet's first journal of the 1926 season are the words "Tod her book." Tod appears to have been Blanchet's nickname for his wife.

home of these prizes to his lady in chivalric fashion, often describing them to her in romantic detail:

> I told you a way back I'd give you the smallest head of the Coppermine. It will have to be a choice as there are several. You could have the one rising in the lakes in the high sand hills where the seven bull caribous live or the short one rising in the chain of lakes in the high hollow point where the ruined castle is or the one with the highest willows with the high smooth hills. They are all nice rivers dear....

The next summer, departing from his usual practice of ascertaining local toponyms for features, he gave a small lake her name.[89] In these actions, Blanchet performed other kinds of masculine roles—the husband, the lover, and the knight on a northern crusade—that drew upon mental constructions of an opposing femininity, as represented by his wife.

Eileen's presence is never long absent from his diaries' pages, and thoughts of her haunted his steps, sometimes to the point where he felt physically torn, half longing to explore, half longing to turn around immediately and set out for home. Unlike men who sought life on the frontier as an escape from the confines of domesticity, he felt the lack of this state acutely in the rough talk between the men with whom he reluctantly, at times, shared his travels.[90] Especially when his relations with others in his party became stormy, he sought comfort by "visiting" her in his journal, where he would record imagined conversations and romantic liaisons as well as memories of their happy times together. There is no indication of Eileen's psychic centrality to his fieldwork anywhere in his publications. As he once wrote, "personal sentiment should not intrude in a serious story of survey and country."[91] To delve more deeply into the dynamics of Blanchet's representations of femininity, domesticity, and race is beyond the scope of this chapter.[92] However, the feminine and domestic threads that underlay his masculine and martial actions must at least be acknowledged, in order not to misrepresent the complexity of the discourses that couched both Blanchet's northern experiences and his representation of those activities.

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[89] Blanchet, 2 July and [23] August 1924, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, Box 5; Blanchet, 17 July 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 15-July 26, File 2, Box 3; Blanchet, 2 August 1925, Taltson journal, 1925, July 28-Aug 19, File 3, Box 3; Blanchet, 29 June 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, June 7-June 30, File 4, Box 3; all MS 0498, BCA.

[90] Blanchet, 14 and 26 June 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, June 7-June 30, File 4, Box 3; Blanchet, 3 July 1926, Dubawnt journal, 1926, July 1-July 23, File 5, Box 3; Blanchet, [24] July 1924, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, Box 5; all MS 0498, BCA.

[91] Blanchet, "Beyond the Ranges," unpublished MS, 145-46, Box 9, MS 0498, BCA.

[92] One model for a possible future extension of this discussion would be the work of Paul White on the correspondence of Thomas and Henrietta Huxley, in which Henrietta actively helps to construct her husband's identity as a man of science. See White, *Thomas Huxley: Making the "Man of Science"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 1.

The leisurely North

George Douglas's travels, undertaken also under the aegis of the back-to-nature movement, were informed by a different constellation of motivations, many of which were located in his childhood and early adulthood. While his friend Blanchet had always lived in Ottawa or Victoria, and had therefore met extra-urban nature on a visitor's terms, Douglas had been a rural resident for most of his life. The landscape with which he felt most familiar was a part of Ontario, the Kawartha Lakes, which had, in fact, served as a focal point for back-to-nature enthusiasts from urban parts of the province since the late nineteenth century.[93] Douglas's father, Campbell Mellis Douglas, had been driving to a major canoeing regatta in 1883, when he noticed a farm for sale, located just outside the small town of Lakefield. That farm, renamed Northcote, became Douglas's home in childhood and again in adulthood.[94] Campbell, a canoeing enthusiast, had invented a canvas folding boat upon which he based a small business, only one of many such recreational canoe building firms in the Lakefield and Peterborough area.[95] Whilst growing up, Douglas and his brother Lionel spent much of their time exploring the surrounding countryside by water. Canoeing in the hinterland, then, was not an occasional pastime for Douglas, but a way of life and a source of family income throughout his childhood. This idyllic life was dashed by Douglas's enforced move overseas, where he adjusted badly to the industrial surroundings of northern England. He continually sought refuge in long cycling trips throughout the countryside, accompanied by some of Henry David Thoreau's writings in his pocket.[96] His subsequent career was spent in the dry American Southwest, another landscape very different to that of his youth.

Douglas's earliest trip north in 1911-12, undertaken with his brother Lionel Douglas and the geologist August Sandberg, was kindly bankrolled by a wealthy family cousin, James Douglas. James may have wanted to distract Douglas from his grief over the recent death of his father as much as to send him to investigate potential copper deposits in the Coppermine

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[93] Jamie Benedickson, "Paddling for Pleasure: Recreational Canoeing as a Canadian Way of Life," in *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on Its Evolution in Canada,* eds. Geoffrey Wall and John Marsh (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 329.

[94] Douglas to Stefansson, 11 June 1958, File 8, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA; Douglas to Kenneth Durant, 10 November 1958, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Correspondence, 1895-1962, MSS 196, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (hereafter cited as RSC). See also Jean Murray Cole, "Kawartha Lakes Regattas," in *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshoe*, eds. Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (Toronto: Betelgeuse Books, 1985), 205-9.

[95] Mallory, *Coppermine*, 2; John Marsh, "The Heritage of Peterborough Canoes," in *Nastawgan*, 211-22; Benedickson, "Paddling for Pleasure."

[96] Hildebrand, foreword to *Lands Forlorn,* vii-viii.



Figure 2.3. George Douglas outside the cabin in which he, Lion Douglas, and August Sandburg overwintered on Great Bear Lake in 1911-12. Credit: Queen's University Archives / George Whalley fonds.

region.[97] Having lived in arid zones for many years by then, Douglas may also have been motivated by the chance to spend some restorative and therapeutic time in a wilderness and a pursuit reminiscent of the happy days of his childhood. He subsequently became powerfully attracted to the northern landscape, and it proved a lure sufficient to draw him out of his early years of retirement in order to undertake several more prospecting trips in the region. Like many other northern fieldworkers of the past and present, Douglas was able to satisfy his desire for wilderness travel through his vocation.[98] His diaries and letters admit that he found great leisure in the North amidst his professional work there.

Unlike Blanchet, Douglas did not use the North to shore up his sense of masculinity, nor did he have any desire to live in a primitive fashion.[99] But, like Blanchet, his private reaction to modernity involved a sense of alienation from the present predicated upon a longing for types

[97] Ibid., x.
[98] Shelagh D. Grant, "George M. Douglas and the Lure of the Coppermine," in *Nastawgan*, 114.
[99] By contrast, James Douglas's foreword to Douglas's account of his 1911-12 experiences strikes what are by now familiar martial and activist notes: "[T]he race has happily not yet become so effeminate that men cannot be found willing to exchange the luxuries of civilisation for the novelties and adventures of work in the wilderness ...." James Douglas, introduction to *Lands Forlorn*, v.

of physical and spiritual experiences found predominantly in the past. His northern letters and diaries throughout the 1920s and 1930s are marked by a persistent nostalgia for and a precise remembrance of his previous endeavours therein. His private experience of time involved an overlapping of the past and present that formed a personal northern temporality tied to the spaces that the same few beloved landscapes and relics occupied. Douglas's gradual loss of control over his movements and equipment, and thereby his experience of time and space, is mirrored by his representation of the disturbance and destruction of this familiar northern landscape, to which the chronicles of his later trips bear witness.

To understand that for which Douglas would later long, one must realize just how central proper order and forethought were to Douglas's comfort and success as a northern traveller. The preparations for his first trip were marked by assiduous research into the anticipated environmental and geographical conditions of Great Bear Lake and the Coppermine region. Douglas was equally diligent in his assembling of the perfect outfit, which centred around two canoes that the Peterborough Canoe Company built precisely to his specifications. "All kinds of details must be attended to," Douglas wrote to his cousin in May of the year before their departure:

> I want to give the building of the canoes my supervision + a thoroughly practical trial, afloat, in swift water + on ice. Everything else about the equipment should be tested out leaving nothing to the chance of its being all right. ... Such elaborate attention to detail might be thought hardly necessary but this has not been the experience of successful trips: the more carefully preparations are made and equipment tested out the most sure we are of results.[100]

A year and a half later, writing after a trial trip to the Coppermine the autumn before they intended to follow it to the Arctic Ocean, Douglas noted of his equipment that "everything was of the very best. It has cost a lot but events proved its value: only the perfection of our equipment pulled us through."[101] He was impatient with what he considered to be the haphazard manufacture and substandard quality of the few items that they had mistakenly waited until their arrival in the North to purchase, including fur clothing, snowshoes, and toboggans: "Of a country that is snow covered nine months in the year [the] snow utensils [of

[100] Douglas to James Douglas, 20 May 1910, File 15, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC.
[101] Douglas to James Douglas, 26 December 1911, File 4, Volume 4, MG30 B95, LAC. This point is re-emphasized later in the letter: "[W]e had tackled a job more difficult than I expected, especially for only two men: our equipment for the purpose was perfect and proved to the last detail."

the northern First Nations people] are the very poorest I have ever seen. Their toboggans are heavy clumsy + childish beyond belief such sleighs as I have seen as even worse."[102]

The party's mental and psychological equipment over the winter of 1911-12 was cared for and guarded as carefully as their other possessions. Douglas, Lion, and Sandberg rotated the tripartite duties of cook, woodchopper, and hunter on a weekly basis. Meals were predicated on a careful schedule that gave minimum trouble to the cook, maximum daylight to the hunter and woodchopper, and maximum comfort to all. Douglas declared that this regular, systematic life, with its varied tasks, helped the winter pass as quickly and pleasantly as possible.[103] Orderly routine not only warded off boredom, but also the temptation to partake of the northern lifestyle, which Douglas considered ultimately harmful to the civilized mind and body: "Protracted residence in that country ... lowers standards of reliability and efficiency and warps accuracy of judgment."[104] Such a view echoes that of back-of-nature advocates, who believed that, while the wilderness provided a pleasant place for a temporary respite from city life, permanent residence there would lead to mental degradation and, ultimately, savagery.[105]

There is an important passage near the end of Douglas's published account of this expedition about his readjustment to civilization:

> At first ... we took up our civilised life where it had been broken off; we resumed at once our old set of ideas and our old ways of doing things. Some time passed before we began to feel in many subtle ways the results of a long absence. In regard to the great world we were the same people who had left it eighteen months before, but while we were relatively unaltered our world had gone on its appointed course, and unhastening, unceasing, the appointed changes had been wrought. It was ground irrevocably lost; no skill, nor energy, nor address, could recover it. The times had changed, the change in ourselves had no reference to them but made conformity to established usages more than ever difficult.[106]

This may seem little more than a common trope found at the end of travelogues and expedition narratives, but its real implications here will shortly become clear. There is a case for believing very literally that Douglas had, in some intangible way, fallen out of step with universal time as his world counted it after his return to that world in 1912.

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[102] Unaddressed letter by Douglas, June 1911, File 6, Volume 4, MG30 B95, LAC.
[103] Douglas, *Lands Forlorn*, 153, 164.
[104] Ibid., 8.
[105] Schmitt, *Back to Nature*, 135, 176. Writers of adventure stories set in the wilderness similarly stressed that habitation there was only temporary and had to close with a return to the civilized world. See Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Myths: A Geography of Adventure* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 56-57, 60, and Grace, *Idea of North*, 181-82, 185.
[106] Douglas, *Lands Forlorn*, 270.

The timeful North

Douglas was not the only person in that era to feel time passing in a manner that seemed disparate from the norm. Stephen Kern has written about the ways in which modernity, which he frames as a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time—including its separate iterations as the past, the present, and the future—and space. Kern posits that the key manner in which this generation engaged with the past was to look to it for stability while their society underwent rapid technological, cultural, and social change.[107] Jay Winter has extended the longevity of this bond with the past into the interwar era, describing certain elements of society as walking backwards into the future.[108]

Holding fast to the past is most commonly parsed, though sometimes incorrectly, as nostalgia. In an insightful essay about the relations between time, modernity, and nostalgia, Kim Sawchuk defines this state of mind as "a melancholia caused by a protracted absence, a wistful, excessively sentimental and even abnormal hankering for the return of some real or romanticized period or irrecoverable condition or setting in the past." [109] She argues that nostalgia, rather than being dismissed or caricatured as "mawkish, maudlin, soppy, mushy and slushy romanticism," may be regarded as a subconscious reaction to the major restructurings of space and especially time that took place around the turn of the century, particularly with the universal standardization of time in the Western world of the 1880s. This reading is based on her conviction that nostalgia, and the sadness and melancholy often associated with it, is unintentionally demeaned today because of its association with the feminine, and thereby the irrational and the sentimental. Sawchuk wonders if this negativity might be replaced with a positive valuation of nostalgia as "a step towards a remembrance of things past, towards a history that includes the senses, a history of home and hearth." By refusing nostalgia, conversely, "we are protected from these sentiments, hardened against feeling both the losses in our lives and the changes within our society and culture that are not of our making but that are in the interests of those classes who benefit from the ideology of unrestrained progress."

Sawchuk's thoughts on nostalgia provide an excellent context for Douglas's sentimental attachments to the things he had used, the places he had camped, and the paths he had travelled in the North. They also help to explain the disjuncture between Douglas's occupational

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[107] Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*.
[108] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 222.
[109] The following summary is based on Sawchuk, "Modernity, Nostalgia," 161-62.

identity, which was one that purportedly favoured the rapid development of northern resources, and his private concern over the rate and extent of industrial activity in the North of the 1930s. The twin processes of an evolving northern industrial presence and the devolving of Douglas's control over his immediate and general surroundings may best be understood by perusing his trips of the interwar period in sequence.

Douglas's second trip to the North occurred in 1928, a full seventeen years after he had first visited the region. Sponsored by United Verde Copper Company, which was headed by Jimmy "Rawhide" Douglas (also James Douglas's son), George Douglas and George's partner Carl Lausen, a prospector, made the first geological investigation of the southeastern shores of Great Slave Lake. On this occasion, as in 1911-12, Douglas retained full control over his equipment and the rate and means of his travel. For example, he elected to travel north from Waterways, in northern Alberta, by canoe and outboard motor instead of the Hudson's Bay Company's steamship, which was at that time the standard choice of travellers. This decision was made both in order to accustom his inexperienced companion to travelling by canoe and to allow Douglas to enjoy the deliberately slow pace of travel, which he believed allowed excellent and prolonged views of familiar settlements and other well-remembered landmarks from his last trip down the Slave and Mackenzie Rivers in 1911. On this 1928 trip, Douglas established a base of operations on Eagle Island, a small outcropping about 10 miles northeast of the mouth of the Taltson River, to which he would subsequently return.

Describing the summer's work in an address to the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, Douglas demonstrated the same punctilious attitude toward orderly provisions and preparation that had marked his first northern outing. Almost half of the published article is occupied with describing and justifying their outfit in minute detail. However, Douglas was also aware of the social and technological changes that were beginning to alter the region. Where it had once been "a fur trading country and nothing else," now, "with easier and improved transportation facilities, and a consequent influx of white men, it is changing from this status to something at present not clearly indicated."[110] The old and the new were starkly contrasted in Douglas's description of two other expeditions that had worked in the same area that summer. While H.S. Wilson and his party, sponsored by the Nipissing Mines Company, had "depended on nothing but their own strength, unaided by any later mechanical inventions such as out-board engines and aeroplanes," Northern Aerial Minerals Exploration Ltd. had done extensive work "with its utilization of aeroplanes to an extent and on a scale never attempted before in

[110] Douglas, "A Summer Journey," 359.

prospecting."[111] Douglas would experience both these modes of travel in the course of his next two trips, both of which took place in 1932.

In March of that year, Douglas made a quick, secretive trip by airplane from Edmonton to Great Bear Lake in order to stake some coal deposits that he had noticed on Douglas Bay twenty years earlier, and which LaBine's recent discovery of pitchblende nearby might render commercially important. While flying was novel to Douglas, his experiences on the ground were not dissimilar to his past ones there. In a letter to his brother, he repeated, several times, the sensation that he had never been away from the North. Neither certain people, nor certain sights, nor even the well-remembered taste of the excellent bacon, eggs, and scones in Mason's restaurant at McMurray seemed to have altered to any significant degree.[112] Douglas's sense of déjà vu only grew stronger that summer when he returned to Great Bear Lake to undertake some more prospecting for and staking of coal deposits at several different sites there. In the unpublished memoir, illustrated with his own photographs, in which he recorded his experiences on this trip, he used a literary construction, one that appears regularly in his writing, to juxtapose with precision his past and present experiences of exact points in the landscape:

> We said good bye to those at the post who were awake and passed through the narrow channel in the lake just as we had done in the 'Jupiter' twenty one years before, almost to the day. ... We were now in well-remembered waters. On July 18th, 1912, twenty years before almost to a day, we had entered this bay in the 'Aldebaran' on our homeward voyage from the Dease River. ... Now on July 17th 1932, in the 'Alcyone,' I ran along the same shore into the same beautiful bay, and came alongside at the same camping place.[113]

Their campsite at Douglas Bay had not been disturbed. The stake to which they had formerly tied the "Aldebaran" still stood near the water, and their cut and stacked firewood from two decades before served to light their fire that very night. Indeed, the place seemed

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[111] Ibid., 358.

[112] Douglas to Lionel Douglas, 10 March 1932, File 19, Volume 4, MG30 B95, LAC. Douglas's description of this flight is published in Walter E. Gilbert, *Arctic Pilot* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1939), 129-38. Of his passenger, Gilbert wrote, "Douglas, who had never before flown over snow and was seeing that part of the country again for the first time after twenty years, was full of romantic enthusiasm about everything. Memories of the days when he took his famous trip in the *Jupiter* came cropping up and his account of it all was so good that I am giving it in his own words, coloured as it is with the imagination of the writer-explorer." Gilbert, *Arctic Pilot*, 129-30.

[113] Douglas, "Fort Norman, Bear River, Great Bear Lake, Voyage of the ALCYONE, June, July—Memoir with mounted photographs," File 22, Volume 4, MG30 B95, LAC. Although Douglas published neither the technical results of his fieldwork nor the personal experiences of his trips North in the 1930s, he put together several scrapbooks of typed "memoirs," illustrated heavily with his photographs, that record some details of those summer field seasons. As demonstrated in this quotation, Douglas named his boats after stars, reflecting an interest in astronomy acquired during his three years at sea. Grant, "George M. Douglas," 102.

hardly to have changed in twenty years, partly because the aridity of the lacustrine micro-climate slowed material decay.[114] Neither the extinguished logs of their old campfire nor the boughs that had comprised Douglas's bed of brush looked more than one or two years old, to his surprised eyes: "It was indeed a strange experience to return to this well remembered camp, and find the traces we had left so little changed, while such momentous changes had taken place in the great world without, these frail branches of spruce had outlasted human empires and systems of civilization." He felt well content to be on Great Bear Lake, where, from a safe distance, he could reflect "on the changes for the worse wrought by twenty years." Exploring a little ways down the lake from their camp, he discovered a multitude of human scoriations on the shoreline, the most recent of which was far older—perhaps nearly a century—than their own traces of twenty years before. Douglas perceived that these markings belonged to the parties of Franklin, Dease, Simpson, and Richardson, all of whom had travelled along the same coast in the mid-nineteenth century.

The summers of 1928 and 1932 had been relatively idyllic, if mostly unproductive in their result. Douglas returned to both great lakes of the North in 1935, again on behalf of United Verde. For the first time, some discord and distress pervaded his remembrances of the past and descriptions of the present. It was a complicated summer of fieldwork that involved a sequence of stints on Lake Athabasca, the east arm of Great Slave Lake, Cameron and Douglas Bays of Great Bear Lake, and then a return to Great Slave Lake. "Certainly I think this is the most varied and 'exciting' of all my trips to the North," Douglas wrote, "and perhaps one of the least pleasant rather too much work."[115] This sentence's last word reminds the reader that, up until that time, Douglas had regarded these northern trips as an opportunity for leisure amidst the tasks he was engaged to perform.

The summer's activities relied heavily upon the timetables of other people, particularly those of the pilots who were to move them from place to place. Moreover, Douglas had several different partners on various legs of his work, not all of whom proved to be up to his exacting standards, or even congenial company. As he wrote to Lion, it "was really a very lonely summer. Bobby [Jones, his companion on Great Slave Lake] was all right but terribly limited + ignorant while Blanchet with all his good qualities was not a pleasant travelling companion."[116] In contrast to his previous expeditions, Douglas did not have complete control over all aspects of

[114] Liza Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), 30.
[115] Douglas to Lionel Douglas, 8 September 1935, File 7, Volume 5, MG30 B95, LAC.
[116] Ibid.

his fieldwork. As a natural leader, this state of affairs troubled him. He was relieved, at the summer's close, to return to Eagle Island and to find his beloved canoes safely stowed where he had unwillingly been forced to leave them. "[C]ontent with canoe travel and camping," he was, "above all, glad to be done with planes, and once more master of [his] own movements."[117]

Indeed, Eagle Island and its environs proved to be that summer's happiest haven of memories, which Douglas experienced in a manner reminiscent of his re-encounter with Great Bear Lake in 1932. His return after six weeks of fieldwork "to this beautiful and now familiar place was almost like coming home." At a nearby camp that they had revisited, the traces of Douglas and Lausen's presence in 1928 had seemed "unexpectedly fresh and recent." The half-burned logs of their campsite seemed this time "no more than a few weeks old." A stack of chopped wood, an old packing case, and, most gratifyingly, cans of gasoline and oil lay there undisturbed, ready to serve once again as they had done seven years ago. The entire site was pristine, unmarred by any other signs of recent life.[118]

This feeling of stopped or slowed time had been even stronger upon Douglas's arrival, earlier that summer, at Douglas Bay on Great Bear Lake: "It was a curious and overpowering experience to find myself suddenly transported back to this familiar spot. There was nothing to indicate the passage of time: I felt as though I had never been away from the place...." But difference soon became apparent; the happy illusion was dashed. Douglas's cache of supplies from 1932 had been robbed, a thing that had never before happened to him in the North. It seemed a direct consequence of the changes in that region: "No Indian had done this .... Some of the low-down whites brought into the country by the 'Bear Lake Rush' had been guilty of this robbery." The accompanying destruction had been selfish and wanton: cans of gasoline were deliberately split with axes to prevent others from using their stores, and the floorboards of the little cabin nearby had been completely chopped up in search of hidden valuables.

A less shocking but equally dispiriting experience was the "intolerable sloppiness" of the campsite that he shared with Blanchet and two other men on Douglas Bay, alluded to at the beginning of this chapter. In this arena of warring hygienic practice, Douglas, along with their pilot, Matt Berry, had tried and failed to ameliorate their surroundings. Now, for the first time, his familiar mental initiation of the comparison between past and present revealed a depressing decline in his circumstances of fieldwork:

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[117] Quoted in Mallory, *Coppermine,* 217.

[118] Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane in the Far North, 1928 Slave Lake, 1935 Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake—Memoire with Mounted Photographs" (first draft), File 1, Volume 5; Douglas, 26 June 1935, Diary 22 June—14 Sept 1935, File 23, Volume 4; both MG30 B95, LAC.

> Small wonder my thoughts turned regretfully to my previous camp in this same place, and the contrast it made with our present camp. Then we had a perfect, fairly light weight outfit. ... We had the best of food and plenty of everything; .... We were working hard, but not under the same pressure of limited time. There were only two of us, and perfect unanimity of opinion on matters of order and system in camp. Finally we had no deserted camp 700 miles away to think about. Contrast this with our present situation: confined to the shore, committed to the completion of a heavy job in limited time; dearth of game and faced with acute food shortage; and lastly, instead of a well-ordered camp, what I may describe as the sloppiest and worst run camp I ever had anything to do with in the far north.

This charting of decline was one of two striking similarities between this trip and Douglas's last trip to the North in 1938, on which occasion he again did not have the luxury of using his own equipment.[119] The other was the forceful appearance of industrialization, in the shape of the mines and mining camps that he saw being constructed on Cameron Bay in 1935 and Yellowknife Bay in 1938. The latter rose, quite literally and to Douglas's amazement, in the four weeks between two of his visits there; a "helter-skelter, hodge-podge city had replaced the tents."[120] But he could not count himself entirely separate from these developments; the timing of his trips in the 1930s was not coincidental. He, along with many other prospectors, geologists, and engineers, was there in response to the boom in subarctic and arctic mining, which enabled the northern economy to ignore the effects of the Great Depression even as it drew the northern landscape and peoples into global networks of resource extraction.[121] American companies financed Douglas's search, and that of many others, for promising geological formations and mineral veins. Like many of those others, he failed to find anything profitable in return for their investment.

Despite his collusion in such activities, Douglas was still distinctly uncomfortable to see the full-fledged apparatus of his profession, familiar to him from his work in the United States, come to the shores of his beloved northern Canadian lakes. In light of his "long experience of the North and its indigenous life," the mining complex at Cameron Bay seemed "out of place, sordid, and discordant."[122] Walking around the Consolidated mine at Yellowknife three years later, he considered that it had "a good layout," but that it was "strange + depressing to see in

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[119] Speaking of his exploratory work several years after his retirement, Douglas grouped these trips together once more in their weak production of knowledge about the North: "My ... journeys in the far North in 1935 and 1938 were merely prospecting trips, extensive rather than intensive. They were unsuccessful, perhaps because I attempted to cover too much and too new country; and they contributed little or nothing to the knowledge and development of the country." Douglas to Finnie, 19 June 1941, File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[120] Mallory, *Coppermine*, 226.
[121] Piper, *Industrial Transformation*.
[122] Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane," File 1, Volume 5, MG30 B95, LAC.

this country."[123] Upon his last visit to Eagle Island in 1938, his own traces, which once had seemed inviolate, were starting to smudge as a result of the increased traffic around the two great lakes of the North: "I was surprised to find nothing at our old [1928] camp had been touched. Dr. Lausen's + my old fire looked exactly as it had done when I saw it last (1935). ... My old windbreak still in fair shape also the table + big block of wood. But some Indians had had a winter camp at the head of the Pahie dock + the place looked generally used up."[124] His characterization of the site's consumption reflected physiological changes occurring inside of his own body, which had felt increasingly tired, old, even pained at times on his last two trips.[125] After his return to Ontario in the early autumn of 1938, at age 63, he retired from the North altogether.

Throughout the years before and after the First World War, the combination of a favourable climate for preservation, an indigenous respect for property, and a low population density produced little pockets of northern space in which time seemed to move more slowly than in the rest of Douglas's world. These factors provided the perfect conditions for nostalgia, which has been allied to "a viscous and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space."[126] Things were invested with significance far beyond their quotidian usage through their elevation to "relics," as Douglas termed them.[127] He did so half-humorously, perhaps in order to soften the impression one overwhelmingly receives from his unpublished writings—that these were indeed precious, valuable objects to him, redolent of all the sacral connotations of the word, constitutive of a private northern reliquary that held the happiness of his past doings. Relics, like other kinds of ruins, can act as coherent, unified expressions of all of the uncertainties of change in time and the tragedy of loss associated with the past.[128]

While the remnants of campfires and brush beds evoked strong memories in Douglas, the survival of still-useful components of this memorial assemblage allowed the instant bridging of the past and present, as though all the time he had spent away from the North had never been. Yet his constant self-insertion into a time that, for everyone else, was quickly ending if not already gone altogether, eventually rendered him as much a relic as the items clustered around him at familiar campsites. Left over from an earlier era of the North, he felt and mourned its

[123] Douglas, 29 July 1938, Diary 27 April—6 September 1938, File 4, Volume 5, MG30 B95, LAC.
[124] Ibid., 14 June 1938.
[125] Douglas, 24 July 1935, Diary 22 June—14 Sept 1935, File 23, Volume 4; Douglas, 28 April 1938, Diary 27 April—6 September 1938, File 4, Volume 5; both MG30 B95, LAC.
[126] Quoted in Sawchuk, "Modernity, Nostalgia," 160.
[127] Douglas, 16 July 1935, Diary 22 June—14 Sept 1935, File 23, Volume 4, MG30 B95, LAC.
[128] Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 40.

passage, commemorated it as long as he was able to do so, and finally left his traces behind for the last time.

The royal road to the North

The experience of time and space in the North underwent a stunning reversal in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. As many scholars have noted, the effects of modernity were not spread evenly over the globe, and were not felt equally in all places at all times. The felt, lived gap between the past and future North into which Douglas and Blanchet found themselves slipping was the consequence of this sudden rush in modernization in the late 1920s, blooming fully in the 1930s, that had been almost completely driven by one technology—the airplane. Personal encounters with this means of conveyance gave Blanchet and Douglas a chance to reflect on the past, the present, and the future, and the methods of knowing the North that seemed allied to each of these ages. The airplane might be, in Blanchet's phrase, the royal road to the North.[129] But to where did that road ultimately lead? In accordance with the antimodernist sentiments ascribed to each man so far, they saw the advantages and disadvantages of both the methods they had championed and the ones that, increasingly, technology had conferred upon the next generation of northern fieldworkers.

The airplane solved problems of knowledge, access, and recovery endemic to the North that had hindered the development, longed for by government and industry alike, of that region's natural resources. It resolved the paradox presented by a land that was a source of potential wealth, but also a major obstacle to knowing and exploring that wealth. As Blanchet observed, the tradition of tough overland surveys that stretched back to Samuel Hearne was coming to the limit of its usefulness.[130] At the rate of work then current in the 1920s, it would take more than a century to map northern Canada completely using ground forces alone, according to one estimate.[131] Throughout the interwar era, the lack of accurate cartographic representations of the region had frustrated interests as varied as freighting companies, prospecting and mining companies, the fledgling aviation industry, and the military.

The airplane enabled the comparatively more cost-effective method of aerial surveying, which Marionne Cronin terms "a constellation of techniques clustered around the use of aircraft

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[129] Blanchet, "Caribou of the Barren Grounds," 25; Blanchet, "Thelewey-aza-yeth," *The Beaver*, Outfit 280 (September 1949): 8.
[130] Blanchet, "Conquering the Northern Air," *The Beaver,* Outfit 269, no. 4 (1939): 11.
[131] J.R.K. Main, *Voyageurs of the Air: A History of Civil Aviation in Canada, 1858-1967* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), 299.

to acquire information about the country's geography and geology."[132] One such technique was simple aerial reconnaissance, where a surveyor visually scanned an area from an aircraft, sometimes supplementing his observations with hand-drawn sketches. Within a decade, this practice had developed to the point where an experienced surveyor could identify geological types from the air, using vegetation, ground cover, and surface features as markers of reference. Prospectors were therefore able to gain a rough outline of geological features in a remarkably short period of time. Aerial photography also allowed the capturing of landscapes from above, using the oblique method that had proved most suited to the northern Canadian environment.[133]

Access to northern sites of work was also eased, as airplanes permitted institutions and companies to deploy teams of fieldworkers with less investment of time and money. These crafts could move surveyors or prospectors around the North quickly to a series of pre-determined sites at scheduled times, drop supplies and mail to these parties throughout the summer, and then pick them up at the close of the season. Once conditions of winter flying were better understood, airplanes could also extend the summer field season well back into spring—as seen with Douglas's March flight in 1932—or well forward into autumn, until break-up or freeze-up forced the grounding of planes for some weeks during the equinoctial seasons. Airplanes also enabled prospectors to cover a much larger expanse of ground in one field season than had hitherto been possible. Finally, the airplane facilitated the transportation of large quantities of equipment, supplies, and minerals from remote sites in the North to southern industrial hubs in Canada or the United States, and thereby overcame the main limiting factor on the development of a northern mining industry. Transport costs sank into insignificance if the mineral finds were rich enough.[134] Commercial aviation companies developed close relationships with niche markets, especially that of mining, to their mutual benefit.[135]

Given the many aspects of life and work that the airplane ameliorated in the region, it was no wonder that the vision of a vibrant, prosperous North emerged as the centrepiece of

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[132] Marionne Cronin, "Northern Visions: Aerial Surveying and the Canadian Mining Industry, 1919-1928," *Technology and Culture* 48 (2007): 306.
[133] Ibid., 316-22.
[134] Main, *Voyageurs of the Air*, 52-53.
[135] Marionne Cronin, "Flying the Northern Frontier: The Mackenzie River District and the Emergence of the Canadian Bush Plane, 1929-1937" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2005), 130.

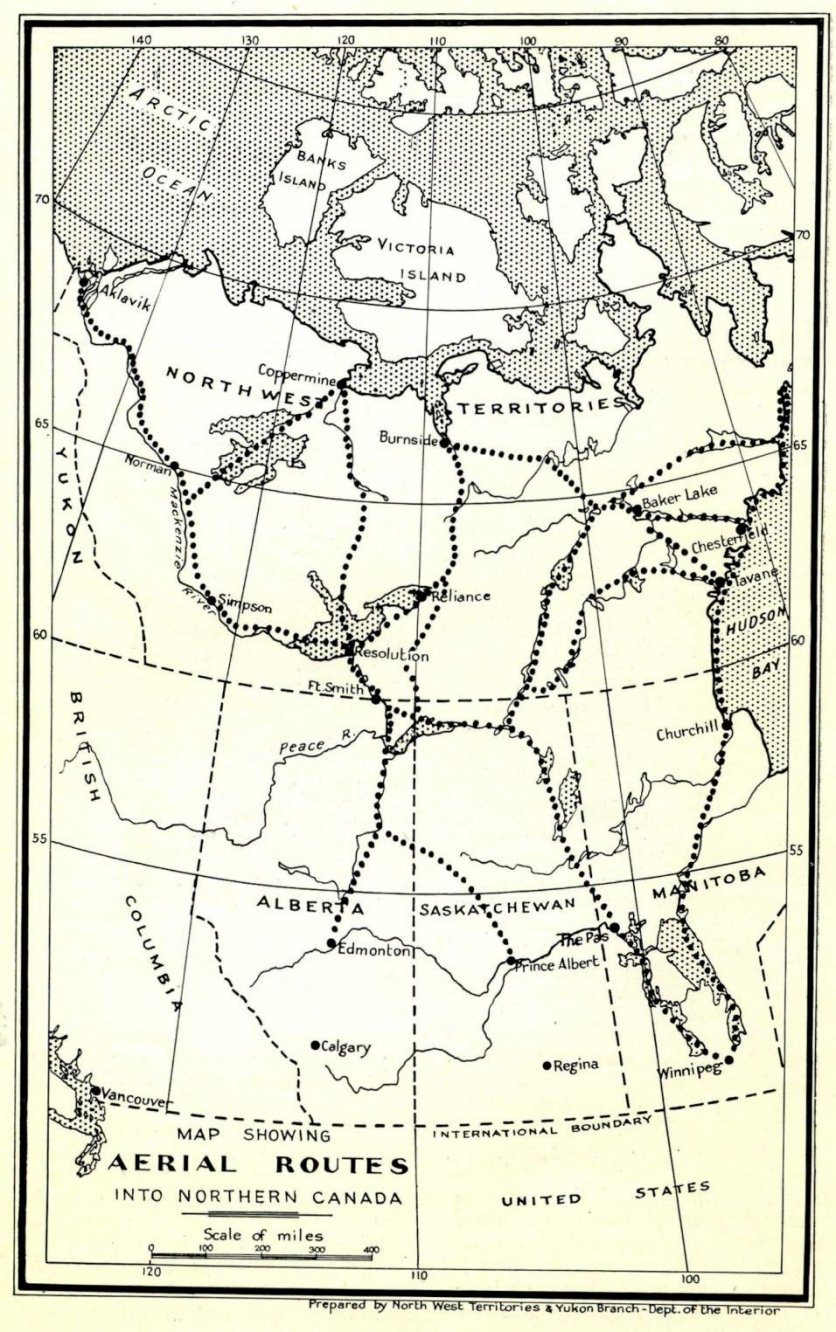

Figure 2.4. The new aerial geographies of the Western Arctic followed the routes of rivers and lakes. Tavane, where Blanchet overwintered when working for Dominion Explorers in 1928-1929, is situated just south of Chesterfield on Hudson Bay. Credit: Blanchet, *Preliminary Report on the Aerial Mineral Exploration of Northern Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1930).

"air-minded" campaigns in Canada's interwar era.[136] In the 1930s, the airplane became as central to northern life as it remained peripheral everywhere else in Canada. The renowned aviator Billy Bishop declared in a speech in 1936: "The average Canadian, leaving out the north country, sees an airplane so seldom that he still regards flying as a dangerous sport or

[136] Jonathan F. Vance, *High Flight: Aviation and the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2002), 150.

experiment."[137] The Canadian government actively encouraged the development of private aviation in remoter regions of the nation, in order to fill the gaps between spaces connected by rail or road in the Canadian transport network.[138] Whilst the airplanes at first duplicated grounded routes, following the major rivers north to the settlements on their banks, their imbrication with the new mining economies soon created new pathways. These routes saw workers, materials, and capital regularly moved between new northern towns and mining camps, such as Cameron Bay on Great Bear Lake and Yellowknife on Great Slave Lake, and southern centres of capital and production. Northern planes played an essential role in the new networks of transportation which enabled the twentieth-century industrialization of the Canadian subarctic.

Yet the airplane's devastation of distance and annihilation of time would have had a larger relative impact in the North than in southern parts of the country anyway, given the much greater distances and much harsher ground conditions that invariably separated northern settlements. What surprised southern visitors to the region most was the ease and speed with which northerners adapted to the collapse of time and distance, the casualness with which they spoke about places 500 or 1000 miles away as though they were just around the corner.[139] The editor of the *Canadian Geographical Review* told an anecdote about breakfasting with a pilot in McMurray in the autumn of 1933, and about seeing the same man that evening in the same restaurant, "unconcernedly eating his dinner. 'Where have you been?' he was asked. 'O, delivering mail to Chipewyan, Resolution, Providence and Rae.' A thousand miles of air travel between meals!"[140]

If the North had once been the place where time passed most slowly in Canada, in the space of just a few years it had become the place where hours flew by at their quickest. As if to express this revolution, the juxtaposition of old and new technologies of travel became the most popular and important visual and literary trope in representations of the North in the late 1920s

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[137] Quoted in ibid., 110.
[138] Cronin, "Flying the Northern Frontier," 57.
[139] Lawrence J. Burpee, "Where Rail and Airway Meet," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 10 (1935): 239-45. Aviation also drew upon and extended what might be called northern cultures of civility and knowledge production. Pilots conversationally traded information based on their experiences with northern landscapes whenever they met, and less experienced pilots took every opportunity to learn from more experienced ones when they spent a few hours or a night in a settlement together. Pilots would also take geologists and prospectors up on casual, off-the-record flights that afforded them a better view of landscapes in which they were interested. See Cronin, "Flying the Northern Frontier," 185; Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), 371.
[140] "Travel—Adventure—Recreation," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 7, no. 4 (1933): xii.

and 1930s.[141] "Man-power—steam—air. Transportation of a thousand years—of yesterday—of to-day," trumpeted one author bombastically. Blanchet's version of these images was audibly and wistfully romantic, tinged literally in sepia:

> The roar of the airplane and the grumble of the tractor have replaced what were softer sounds; the swish of the paddle and the purl of the bow wave; the bells of a pack train and the tinkle of those of a dog team. The birch bark canoe and the teepee, tinted from light to deep brown by the ascending smoke from its cooking fires, these have become memories.[142]

Technologies of motion, as Sidonie Smith notes, have the potential to reorder many aspects of travellers' lives, including the narratives they tell, the evidence of their five senses, their relationships pertaining to gender, class, and race, and their perceptions of time and space.[143] Although Douglas and Blanchet may not have thought in precisely these terms, they were nevertheless acutely aware that exploration by airplane had certain drawbacks in addition to the advantages outlined above, particularly in terms of how it positioned travellers differently within time and space. Douglas worried that the airplane's quick coverage of space, traversed much more slowly by travellers on the ground, produced brief and superficial encounters that distorted the vagaries of the actual landscape:

> It looks so darned easy when you are flying—it makes for erroneous conclusions. The sense of proportion is lost, and even worse than that such important things as common sense seem to lose their significance when travelling at height and speed. ... [I]t is a tool requiring discrimination and knowledge. The important things are thought and sight, and there is always more to see than you can take in no matter how slowly and carefully you go. As for sweeping over the country at two or three thousand feet above it and at a rate of 150 miles an hour—So far as learning anything about it you would do better to sit at home and study a map.[144]

Douglas's concerns touched not only upon the compression of the present, but also upon the degradation or severance of relationships between past and present times. In order to undertake grounded travel through the northern environment, travellers had regarded, and continued to regard, the records and travelogues of their peregrinatory predecessors as invaluable resources. By contrast, Douglas found that some pilots espoused a cavalier neglect of

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[141] For analogous invocations of this trope elsewhere in the twentieth-century world, see David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (London: Profile Books, 2008), 28.
[142] Burpee, "Where Rail and Airway Meet," 239; Blanchet, "Canada North and West," unpublished MS, File 8, Box 13, MS 0498, BCA.
[143] Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
[144] Douglas to Jim Douglas, 17 September 1935, File 7, Volume 5, MG30 B95, LAC.

the history of exploration in the region, such that they were ignorant of great funds of information that might well have been of use to their occupation.[145]

Douglas's friend, P.G. Downes, once commented that air travel gave one's experience of the North a "chattering and particularly inhuman" quality.[146] It was this inhumanity that Douglas and Blanchet deplored in the airplane's undue distanciation of the traveller from the living landscape, human and non-human, below. Journalists who claimed to know the landscape from flying over it, as many asserted in that era, were, to Douglas, both specious and meretricious in their certainty. "[T]hey have seen merely views of the country, not the country itself," he contended.[147] The carapace of the airplane, combined with its dramatic speed and height, sheltered the traveller; it permitted only an evanescent kind of experience that bore no resemblance to the visceral mobility of travelling by canoe and foot.[148] Blanchet agreed on both technical and humanistic grounds. The aerial camera might allow the complete and accurate mapping of northern waterways, but muted the intimate details of the land, such as its soil, timber, and minor topographical features. This fear of lost intimacy runs throughout Blanchet's writings on the aeroplane, and extends to the experiences of the inhabitants as well as features of the land: "Much is gained by the wide view of the aerial camera but something is lost, matters important to those who dwell there."[149]

Those matters were also pertinent, if less so, to those passing through the region. Both Blanchet and Douglas agreed that to fly was to sacrifice much of the inherent interest of northern travel: the joy of flexing and pushing one's muscles to their limit, the immersion in

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[145] Douglas to Richard Finnie, 30 November 1942, File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. A variety of scholars have commented upon the cumulative, referential, and intertextual nature of exploratory knowledge, particularly when rendered in textual form. See, for example, Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 26; Brad D. Hume, "The Romantic and the Technical in Early Nineteenth-Century American Exploration," in *Surveying the Record: North American Scientific Exploration to 1930*, ed. Edward C. Carter II (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1999), 306; Fabian, *Out of Our Minds*, 255; D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 39. For similar observations regarding travel writing, see, for example, Zweder von Martels, "Introduction: The Eye and the Eye's Mind," in *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery and Observation in Travel Writing* (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), xii, and James Duncan and Derek Gregory, introduction to *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, eds. James Duncan and Derek Gregory (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 7. Sherrill Grace also points to this tendency within the general northern discursive field: "There is a surplus here that indicates a psychological need to follow in the footsteps of, to retrace, all those who have gone before and, by so doing, to place oneself in a tradition before finalizing it." Grace, *Idea of North*, 48.

[146] P.G. Downes to Richard Finnie, 30 March 1956, File 5, Volume 6, MG31 C6, LAC.

[147] Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane," File 1, Volume 5, MG30 B95, LAC.

[148] Smith, *Moving Lives*, 32.

[149] Blanchet, "Across the Southern Plateau," in "Beyond the Ranges," unpublished MS, Box 9, MS 0498, BCA; Blanchet, "Thelewey-aza-yeth," 9.

beautiful sights, smells, and sounds, and the chance meetings with others in lonely spaces that provided social, mental, and physical nourishment. One of the greatest pleasures they took in flight, in fact, was the ability to pass over familiar, hard-travelled ground and to see how it appeared from a greatly elevated perspective. At times, the view quickly and easily clarified details of topography that had taken much more effort to ascertain on the ground, as Blanchet thought upon seeing the height of land once more.

However, when flying over landscapes they did not know well, they found the scenes unedifying. Regarding his aerial trip from Fort Rae on Great Slave Lake to Cameron Bay, Douglas wrote, "No doubt if I had passed through the succession of lakes by canoe I would have found an interest in recognizing the different places I had camped, or found particular difficulties. But from a plane the effect of these countless lakes is monotonous."[150] While based at Tavane, Blanchet sometimes went on aerial patrols to observe winter flying conditions. "What a wilderness of gleaming white it was, stretching in all directions, merging uncertainly into the hazy sky—no life, no trees, nothing to relieve the eye or offer diversions! The wide view was depressing and I preferred ground travel where optical illusions often gave interest to trifles."[151] Less trifling was the way in which travel by air seemed implicitly to devalue all kinds of motions and relations that had preceded it in northern space. "From high above," Blanchet wrote, "you lose the pleasant little things that compensate when on the ground. ... [I]t makes the real little things that you know and have been concerned with and valued seem small and unimportant."[152] Seared on his memory were the many small details garnered in the course of his canoe trips over the years; endless views of unknown stretches below held no interest in comparison.

Blanchet's and Douglas's privileging of active, personal, and grounded interaction demonstrates their belief that intimacy with the land, whether gained through habitation or travel, created a stronger and ultimately more responsible bond between people and landscape. Their views refute Mary Louise Pratt's arguments that only inhabitants of a colonial region could view spaces "as intensely humanized, saturated with local history and meaning...."[153] Douglas and Blanchet regretted that this kind of intimacy seemed absent from the new kind of northern development which, not coincidentally, the airplane had facilitated. Aerial views of the North

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[150] Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane," File 1, Volume 5, MG30 B95, LAC.
[151] Blanchet, *Search in the North*, 103.
[152] Blanchet, [16] May 1929, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928-29, File 7, Box 3, MS 0498, BCA.
[153] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 61.

emphasized wilderness, which engulfed small communities in acres of rocks, trees, and water, over human settlement; moreover, it literally shrank evidence of human activity in the wilderness, the clearings, graves, and debris that people had left behind to mark their passing, to nothingness.[154] The general relationship between elevated views and imperialist sentiments has been much discussed. The aviator, "incarcerated in a flying eye socket, ... became a focalizing point of panoramic vision."[155] Indeed, airplanes replaced hills as places where agents of empire could overlook a landscape and, in their mind's eye, superimpose settlements and industries upon uncultivated space.[156]

In the North, the combination of airplane and camera allowed the government to take control of the landscape by literally capturing it, or views of it, on film. Jonathan Vance is in no doubt as to what these actions meant: "This was imperialism plain and simple. The North was to be conquered. The surveyors and camera operators were the advanced guard who would subdue the land with pencil and camera. In their wake, maps and photographs in hand, would come the armies of lumbermen and prospectors."[157] This strong view of imperialism cedes no quarter to the very real ambivalence that some surveyors and engineers, like Blanchet and Douglas, felt about their role in forwarding the modern colonial and industrial order. Nor does it allow any consideration of the fantastic antimodern sentiments that also motivated their actions and that also, perhaps, concealed or reconciled any faint sense of dismay or guilt they may have experienced about their complicity.

Thinking about these contrasting yet concomitant modes of imperial sentiment recalls the work of Paul Carter, which has been instrumental in teasing out the different ways in which colonial space was perceived and coloured.[158] Carter argues that while imperial administrators sought to reduce wild and unsettled space to a defined, settled, and productive territory, explorers engaged with the land in a variety of uncoordinated, unsettling, and deeply personal ways. Graham Burnett, reflecting on Carter's insights, invokes a vision of exploratory work similar to the one that this chapter has sketched:

> [A]ttention to the traces of an active engagement with the land is a point of departure for a history of empire that renounces the imperial point of view. ... [P]laces ... had to be plotted with respect to lines of emotion, experience, and movement, not simply on the homogenizing and bloodless grid of longitude and

[154] Piper, *Industrial Transformation*, 37-38.
[155] Smith, *Moving Lives*, 77-78.
[156] See, for example, Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 60-61; Ryan, *Cartographic Eye*, 6-7.
[157] Vance, *High Flight*, 140.
[158] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

> latitude. Explorers perceived the manifold oversights within the feigned oversight of the imperial gaze.[159]

Even as Blanchet and Douglas participated in the codification and industrialization of the North, processes which were marked by distance, homogenization, and impersonality, they retained sensibilities informed upon an opposing web of values that might be termed those of an intimate, rather than an objective, colonialism.

It is in the clarification of this alternative perspective that the ultimate significance lies of the traces that have been followed so tirelessly in this chapter: Blanchet's views of the head of the Coppermine, given lovingly to his wife; his imaginative revival of the remnants of lives very different to his own; and Douglas's bed of spruce boughs amidst the evidence of many other tiny traces of humanity on the shores of Great Bear Lake. These small, soft scenes, smells, and dreams, so pointed and so vital to the bearers of these memories, seemed to have no place in a rapidly modernizing North, the progressive industrialization of which ground over and devalued the social and economic arrangements it replaced. Neither man was, of course, aware of all the lived nuances of the places in which they were ultimately sojourners rather than residents, and they certainly translated these landscapes through their own memories, hopes, and fears, as all people do. But living, however temporarily, and travelling on that northern ground gave them the ability to perceive that, even if they did not understand all of the webs of social and material and natural relations that bent and stretched and sometimes broke with the changes that were happening, such things were still deserving of notice, respect, and, increasingly, mourning.

This chapter has taken certain of Douglas's and Blanchet's thoughts and practices as symptomatic of larger currents swirling beneath the surface of early twentieth-century North American society, particularly the disillusionment with modernity and subsequent quest for alternative modes of being that was encapsulated in the movement of antimodernism. This interpretation accounts for the strangely contrasting yet simultaneous views that both held on the North. Their desire to regard it as a pristine outpost of the past coincided with a wish to see it made useful and important through the development of its resources. This double vision paralleled the dual purpose of their presence there: while they worked as surveyors and engineers to advance the region's future, they sought pleasure in returning to a natural world from which they drew different kinds of physical and spiritual sustenance unobtainable in their everyday southern Canadian lives. Blanchet's journeys epitomized a martial, masculine strenuousness nourished by an ideal of historical indigeneity. Douglas sought encounters

[159] Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed,* 11-12.

precisely ordered in space and time that were refreshed by their own immaculately preserved historical antecedents. Increasingly, however, industrialization and modernization intruded upon their modern fieldwork and antimodern leisure alike. These forces pulled them back from the land and the past and forced them to contemplate a future in which their values, methods, and indeed, their sensibilities seemed to have little presence or influence. By contrast, the next chapter will consider Stefansson's great influence in the American public eye in the 1920s, and his engagement with one of the most popular genres of that culture: satire.

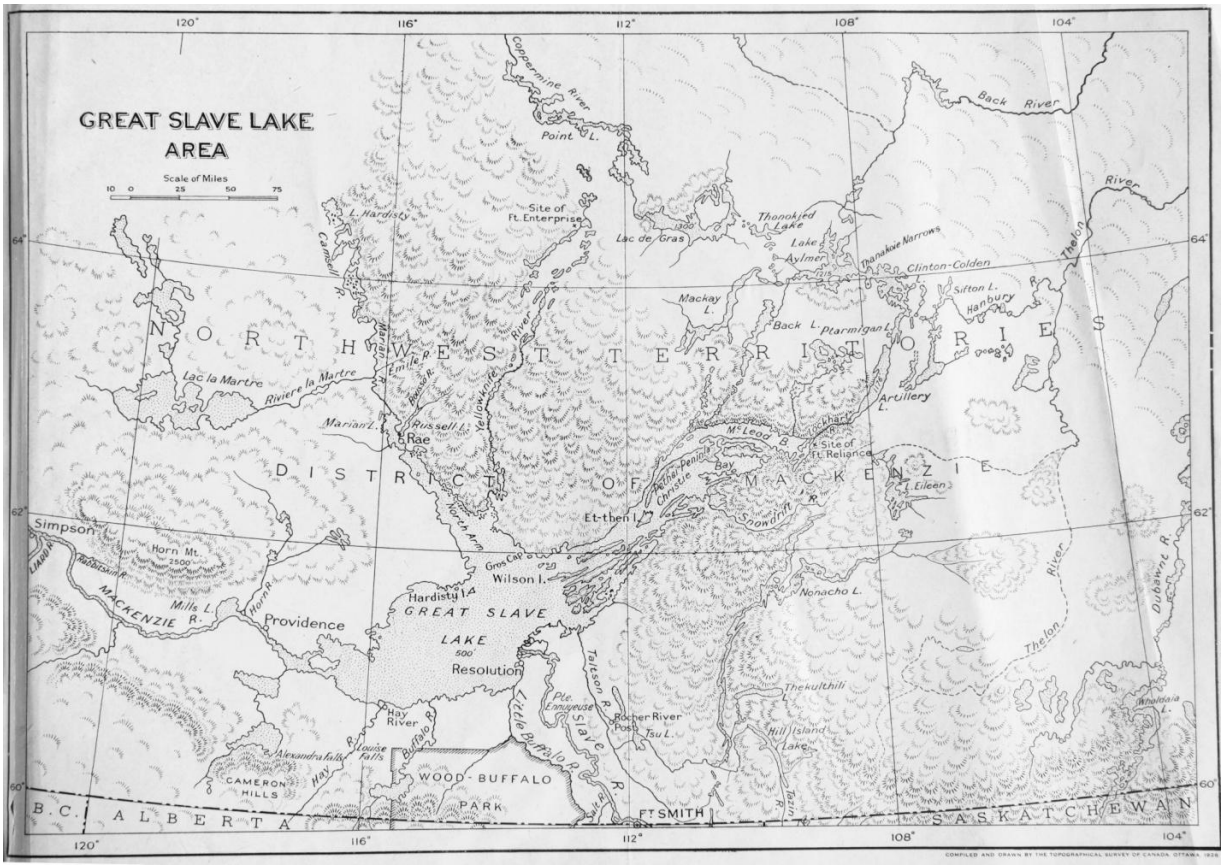

Figure 2.5. Great Slave Lake and environs. Blanchet followed the chain of lakes— Artillery, Clinton-Colden, Aylmer, Thonokied, Lac de Gras, and west over to the head of the Coppermine River—in a northwesterly arc from the east end of Great Slave Lake in 1923 with Souci and Basile, and again in 1924 with a team of surveying assistants. Lake Eileen, named after Blanchet's wife, is visible directly south of Artillery Lake. Credit: Blanchet, *Great Slave Lake Area*.

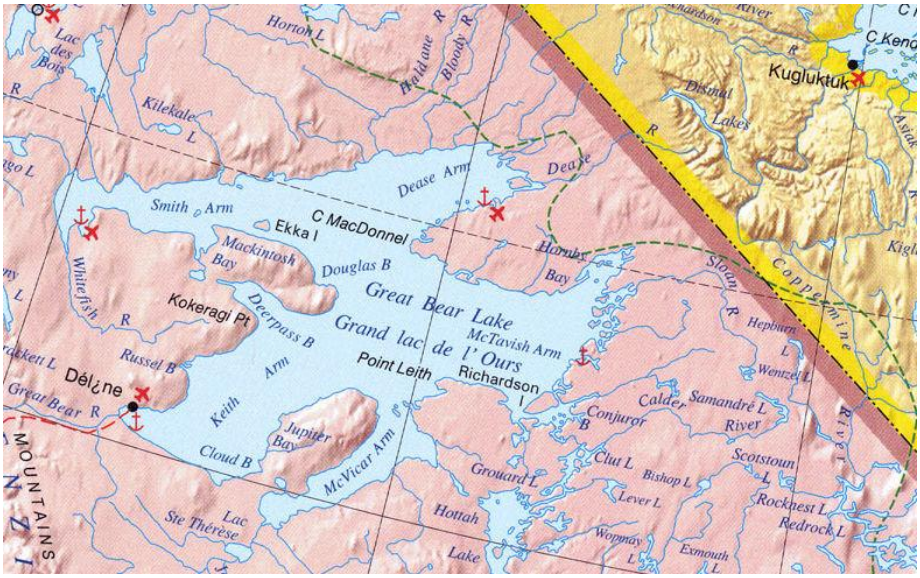

Figure 2.6. Great Bear Lake. In 1911-12, Douglas and his two companions had erected their winter quarters near to where the Dease River flowed into the Dease Arm. In the autumn of 1911 and the spring of 1912, Douglas followed that river northeast to the Dismal Lakes and so onto the Arctic Ocean, shown in the top right-hand corner. Douglas worked at Jupiter Bay in 1932 and at Douglas Bay (where one campsite had evoked so many memories) in 1932 and 1935. Copyright Department of Natural Resources Canada. All rights reserved.

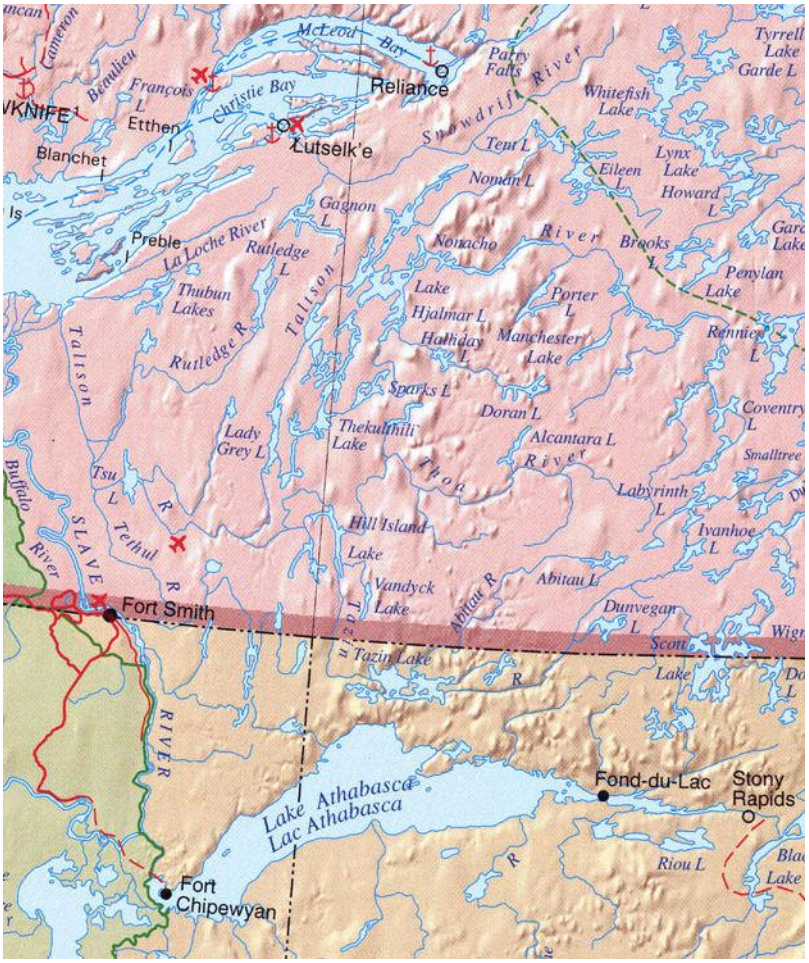

Figure 2.7. The barrenlands plateau region, in which Blanchet and Douglas both worked in the interwar period. Blanchet travelled on the Taltson and Snowdrift Rivers in 1925, and on the Abitau River in 1926. Douglas also worked on the Taltson River, down which Eagle Island lay, in 1928, 1935, and 1938. In his last field season, he worked on the Thubun Lakes (then called "Chubun") just southeast of Great Slave Lake's shores. Copyright Department of Natural Resources Canada. All rights reserved.

Chapter 3: Debunking the Arctic

> *I predict formally that your exposure will have no more effect than my own. People will go on falling for that nonsense until the Second Coming. There is something in the human mind that prefers falsehood to fact.*
>
> H.L. Mencken to Stefansson[1]

The wistfulness and nostalgia that caused some people, including George Douglas and Guy Blanchet, to look longingly to the past during the interwar period was only one of many possible modes through which North Americans could interact with times past. Coupled with what might be termed the tragedy of antimodernism was the comedy of debunking: the often humorous deflation of falsehoods, prejudices, and myths that had been inherited and disseminated from antique to contemporary days. When he returned south from the Arctic for the final time in 1918, Vilhjalmur Stefansson took up the challenge of debunking common knowledge about the Arctic with gusto. This chapter will examine Stefansson's debunking and satirical activities through the 1920s as linked attempts to create a new vision of the Arctic grounded in exploratory knowledge and to experiment publicly with a overtly humorous, even satirical exploratory identity. These novel approaches are situated explicitly both in the context of Stefansson's beliefs and experiences and in the wider social, cultural, and intellectual currents then apparent in American society. If Stefansson's sense of humour is often absent from considerations of his life and work, perhaps this is so because of his twin failures to convince North Americans of the Arctic's friendliness and to have them believe that explorers could maintain a healthy sense of humour in the public eye.[2] The chapter will show through example that Stefansson deployed humour in complex and not always straightforward ways, which may have further confused members of his reading audience.

Stefansson's narrative of travel *The Friendly Arctic* (1921) may not have invented the genre of Arctic-debunking, but it certainly revived it in the public eye. Newly retired as an explorer, he embarked upon an educational campaign supported by lectures, interviews, articles, and books aimed at an Anglo-American audience. His goal was to render common

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[1] H.L. (Henry Louis) Mencken to Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 9 December 1936, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Correspondence, 1895-1962, MSS 196, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (hereafter cited as RSC).

[2] Evelyn Stefansson Nef, "The Private Life of Vilhjalmur Stefansson," in *Vilhjalmur Stefansson and the Development of Arctic Terrestrial Science*, eds. G. Edgar Folk Jr. and Mary A. Folk (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1984), 23.

falsehoods about the Arctic ridiculous and to replace them with truthful, scientifically determined fact. This chapter will investigate the kinds of myths he addressed and the rhetorical strategies that he used to foreground the veracity of his information. He pursued this self-imposed role as slayer of nordic demons with a levity and wit which, then as now, was often misinterpreted, as it meshed uneasily with his serious exploratory reputation. Moreover, his levity occasionally blossomed into outright satire, as in the essays he wrote for H.L. Mencken's literary magazine *The American Mercury*. The most important of these essays was expanded and later republished as *The Standardization of Error* (1927). In this subtle, dry work, Stefansson exposed and critiqued the general tendency of Americans to prefer falsehood to truth in all aspects of their daily lives, not merely with respect to the Arctic. Stefansson's little-known turn as a satirist and his relationship with Mencken, the foremost satirist and debunker in America during the 1920s, are here connected and analyzed for the first time.[3] However, Stefansson did not sustain a creative engagement with either satirical or humorous genres past the mid-1930s, at which point his career was already turning toward different interests and audiences that were incompatible with the irreverent, even caustic observations made in the guise of this non-traditional exploratory persona.

Humorous revelations and revolutions

The unique perspective which Stefansson brought to arctic material in his early career as an author and lecturer was born from his collision with a potent pedagogical moment. An iconoclast with a deep sense of humour and reverence for education, he faced a nation increasingly desirous of teachers and of serious and humorous guidance that would enable them to separate truth from falsehood. By nature and by experience, Stefansson was well equipped to shoulder this mantle. From the time of his youth in North Dakota, he had questioned precepts simply because they *were* widely accepted.[4] Later, he extended this ultra-skeptical methodology to his fieldwork: "I have never ... refrained from testing any theory applicable to my work, no matter what the venerated authority upon which it was said to rest—which is only another way of living up to the good scriptural precept: 'Prove all things; hold fast

[3] Philip N. Cronenwett has suggested that scholars should explore further Stefansson's correspondence, and thereby his relationships with many major figures of his time, including Mencken. See Cronenwett, "The Ceaseless Quest for Knowledge: Stef and His Collection at Dartmouth," in *Electronic Information and Publications: Looking to the Electronic Future, Let's Not Forget the Archival Past*, eds. James W. Markham, Andrea L. Duda, and Martha Andrews (Fort Pierce, FL: International Association of Aquatic and Marine Sciences Libraries and Information Centers, 1999), 25.

[4] Evelyn Stefansson, "The Bookman," *Polar Notes*, no. 4 (November 1962): 43.

that which is true'" (1 Thess. 5:21).[5] This personal willingness to test the bedrock upon which any idea rested allowed him to challenge the expertise of others constantly throughout his career.

The most famous (or infamous) example of this principle was his decision, made during the Canadian Arctic Expedition, to travel with minimal food away from the land and over moving sea ice, and to rely on hunting animals for food and fuel in a region where nobody believed that enough life existed for sustenance. However, the survival of Stefansson and his two companions proved that living off the sea ice, as well as the land, was possible. Many of his fellow polar explorers remained skeptical in turn about its widespread application, and a few, including Roald Amundsen, doubted that Stefansson had actually made such a trip at all.[6] Although his methods and theories were neither globally accepted nor universally popular, Stefansson never shied away from championing an unpopular opinion. He did so both out of a tenacious belief in his personal powers of observation, judgment, and scholarly research, and out of a self-admitted desire for publicity and even controversy in order to keep himself and his ideas under constant and widespread discussion. He sought the spotlight not merely out of egotism and pecuniary interest—although these motives had their place in Stefansson's personality—but also in its capacity as a pedagogical tool. In the conclusion to his manifesto of northern colonization and industrialization, *The Northward Course of Empire* (1922), he admitted that he had deliberately avoided overcitation in order to spark debate:

> If our statement of a point falls short of being convincing, some one may challenge it loudly. Thereupon another who sees the truth ... will arise to the defense of the controverted statement. Thus, he may start the very controversies and create the public interest we desire. The first consideration is to keep the public from forgetting that there is an issue.[7]

Stefansson also had a profound respect for education, which had been a scarce commodity in his upbringing as a child of impoverished settlers in rural North Dakota. An itinerant tutor taught him the alphabet and the skill of reading at the age of five. Later, he would walk three miles to attend one school for three months; after that term had ended, he would

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[5] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "What Do You Know That Isn't So?", *Collier's*, 30 December 1922, 11.

[6] For Amundsen's condemnation, see Roald Amundsen, "On Stefansson," in *Explorers' Club Tales* (London: George Harrap and Co., 1937), 17-21. For other explorers' doubts about the practical utility of the "Stefansson method," as it is sometimes known, see, e.g., Frank Debenham, "The Future of Polar Exploration," *Geographical Journal* 57 (1921): 182-200; H.E. Rudmose Brown et al., "The Future of Polar Exploration: Discussion," *Geographical Journal* 57, no. 3 (1921): 200-204; J.M. Wordie, review of *The Friendly Arctic*, by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Geographical Journal* 59, no. 6 (1922): 469-71; William R. Hunt, *Stef: A Biography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Canadian Arctic Explorer* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), chapter 20.

[7] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *The Northward Course of Empire* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1922), 246.

eke out further teaching by walking as far as necessary to attend other schools with longer terms or different schedules.[8] As an adult, he read voraciously, and counted every encounter with a book as somehow worthwhile: "Poor books despite omissions, misunderstandings, and wrong facts were useful to him. Dated books could tell something worth preserving not to be found elsewhere."[9] This intimate familiarity with misinformation as well as information would serve him well in his debunking career. Stefansson located the greatest evidence of his dedication to education, however, in his mid-life conversion from an arctic traveller to a teacher of arctic conditions, from "life as an explorer of unknown arctic territory to ... life as an explorer of human error."[10] His pedagogical campaign began in a time and a place exceptionally receptive to the form that his teachings would take.[11]

As noted in the previous chapter, after the Great War, North Americans faced the challenge of coming to terms with modernity and its myriad repercussions. Americans, no less than Canadians, struggled with the impact of mass production and consumption, of new forms of mass media like the motion picture and radio as well as resurgent ones such as advertising, of new technologies of motion like the airplane and automobile, and of new methods and sources of data by which to test old assumptions about their culture and world. The effects of all these things on contemporary mores and beliefs were hotly contested.[12] The onslaught of modernity caused many objects and ideas to break loose from their traditional social and epistemological moorings; they had uncertain or unfixed values and meanings thereupon. Partly out of a need to make sense of their own small corner of the universe, many Americans sought educational instruction.

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[8] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "A Half Chapter for an Autobiography," *The Frontier: A Magazine of the Northwest* 8, no. 3 (May 1928): 151.

[9] Evelyn Stefansson, "Bookman," 43.

[10] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Discovery: The Autobiography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 243.

[11] This chapter focuses on the emplacement and reception of Stefansson's campaign in the United States primarily because Americans were his most eager audience. They purchased more of his books and received more of his attention than did Canadians, especially after Stefansson's stature in Canadian political and business cultures began to wane after the mid-1920s. However, some Canadians would still have known of his ideas through reading newspaper articles about his books and lectures and his articles in the American magazines to which many Canadians subscribed. Stefansson's comparative attention to and reception in Canada and the United States during the 1920s is treated at some length in Janice Cavell, "Arctic Exploration in Canadian Print Culture, 1890-1930," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 44, vol. 2 (2006): 7-43.

[12] A summary of the vast literature on American culture in the 1920s, perhaps that country's most celebrated and reviled decade of the century, is beyond the remit of this chapter. A critical historiographical overview of modern scholarly and popular literature on the decade is given in the introduction to Charles J. Shindo's *1927 and the Rise of Modern America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010). Two excellent and comprehensive cultural historical analyses on which this chapter particularly draws are David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939: Decades of Promise and Pain* (Westport, CO: Greenwood Press, 2002) and Susan Currell, *American Culture in the 1920s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

In the 1920s, the country's population became markedly better educated. Double the number of young adults attended high school at the decade's close than at its beginning, and colleges saw a dramatic rise in the number of post-secondary graduates. More opportunities for adult education were available, including university extension programs, correspondence courses, night schools, the talks of lecturers on circuits, book-of-the-month clubs, and women's study clubs. The shortening of the work week and the inauguration of the eight-hour day also permitted Americans more time in which to pursue leisure activities such as reading. The decade's prosperity fostered a dramatic expansion in book publishing such that American publishers issued over 10,000 titles yearly by 1929, as opposed to just over 6,000 in 1920.[13] Furthermore, the installation of electricity in homes led to the greater uptake of reading as a pastime, as those who were unable to read by dim firelight or candlelight could easily and safely read by electric light. This kind of active self-education caused the broadening of readers' knowledge and the expansion of their interests. Broadly, it promoted an increased level of sophistication not readily obtainable otherwise for residents of rural America. As David E. Kyvig notes, "the cartoon symbol of a light bulb being switched on over someone's head as they achieved new insight was firmly grounded in reality."[14]

The vast array of knowledge on offer was increasingly parcelled into separate subjects; in this, it mirrored the continuing professionalization of the natural and social sciences. More people were employed in the pursuit of knowledge, as writers, journalists, scientists, teachers, artists, and intellectuals, than ever before. Specialists in each discipline were developing technical languages that aided their research, but made the knowledge produced increasingly inaccessible to those outside their sphere. The average person, ill-equipped with the training to sift through masses of information herself, came to rely more and more on these specialists and experts to communicate the latest intellectual advances—and to mitigate or rebut the false claims of advertisers, who were growing ever more sophisticated in their techniques.[15] However, the decade also saw a counteractive trend toward the popularization of knowledge, as represented in widely accessible outlines of history and science *à la* H.G. Wells and stories of philosophy and mankind *à la* Will Durant. Wells, Durant, and other popular authors, many of whom possessed higher degrees and taught at universities, summarized and communicated

[13] Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), xii, 31.
[14] Kyvig, *Promise and Pain*, 51.
[15] Warren I. Susman, "Culture and Civilization: The Nineteen-Twenties," in *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 105-21.

disciplinary ideas in non-specialist language for a general audience. Their efforts met with widespread success.[16]

Surrounded by this maelstrom of information, Americans were more concerned than ever to distinguish truth from falsehood. Reflecting this desire, intellectuals of the 1920s produced a vibrant culture of ideas and perceptions intended to liberate society from outmoded and outworn beliefs and behaviours. Many prominent literary modernists subscribed to an ethos of "terrible honesty," a kind of histrionic truthfulness characterized in their compositions by the use of accuracy, precision, and perfect pitch and timing. Such an approach was consciously antithetical to their age's lingering Victorian sensibilities, and they strove to overturn the "make-believe, pusillanimity, and systematic lies" of their forebears.[17] More pertinent to this chapter is another group of writers and intellectuals who took their name from a word invented in 1923. That year, the corporate-slave-turned-novelist William E. Woodward, in his novel *Bunk*, coined a term, "debunking," to describe the vigorous slaying of falsehood and raising up of truth in its place. His novel's protagonist, Michael Webb, believes that "our national consciousness has become as saturated with bunk and hypocrisy as a sponge is saturated with water." The solution he proffered was to clear out, or debunk, mental junk inherited from past times. Debunking was "intellectual deflation," the "science of reality."[18] It became a generalized epithet for the exposure of repetitive or sedimented myth.

The leading American debunker of the 1920s was the Baltimorean journalist, literary critic, satirist, and philologist H.L. (Henry Louis) Mencken (1880-1956).[19] From the pulpit of his well-known column, "The Free Lance," in the *Baltimore Sun*, and as editor of the highbrow cultural magazines *The Smart Set* and *The American Mercury*, Mencken humorously criticized

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[16] On the popularization of philosophy, to which this chapter will return, see Rubin, *Middlebrow Culture,* especially chapter 5; George Cotkin, "Middle-Ground Pragmatists: The Popularization of Philosophy in American Culture," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55 (1994): 283-302; Laura M. Westhoff, "The Popularization of Knowledge: John Dewey on Experts and American Democracy," *History of Education Quarterly* 35 (1995): 27-47.

[17] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (London: Picador, 1996), 8, 31.

[18] William E. Woodward, *Bunk* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), 2, 158, 206-7. The word "bunk," meaning humbug, claptrap, or pretentious nonsense, is an abbreviation of "bunkum" or "buncombe," the latter of which arises from an incident in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1820. Felix Walker, the representative of Buncombe County in North Carolina, insisted on interrupting a debate on the Missouri Compromise with a long, dull, and irrelevant speech. He gave the excuse, "I'm talking for Buncombe." *Talking to* (or *for*) *Buncombe* had entered popular usage by 1828; near the end of the nineteenth century, the word was shortened to assume its modern form. William Safire, ed., *Safire's Political Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 89.

[19] Mencken has received a good deal of biographical attention recently. See Terry Teachout, *The Skeptic: A Life of H.L. Mencken* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002); Vincent Fitzpatrick, *H.L. Mencken* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004); Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, *Mencken: The American Iconoclast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

and debunked various aspects of American life and culture. His common targets, including Puritanism, rural parochialism, philistinism, religious and genteel morality and hypocrisy, and the censoring of speech, were ones upon which other writers in turn seized with relish. His writings gave rise to a cultural atmosphere in which the practice of debunking, even before it had been given that name, was able to flourish throughout the 1910s and especially in the 1920s. In 1926, Walter Lippman called Mencken "the most powerful personal influence on this whole generation of educated people." Ernest Hemingway had Jake Barnes, the protagonist of his novel *The Sun Also Rises*, muse that "so many young men get their likes and dislikes from Mencken."[20]

Debunkers were related to the Progressive movement in America, and particularly to the pre-war political and social reformers known as "muckrakers." These turn-of-the-century men and women had exposed corruption in order to hasten the social reform of rotten or failing institutions. Importantly, Woodward, Mencken, and other writers who identified as debunkers, including Stefansson, were all in their forties by 1920. Having come of age in the Progressive era, these three men all retained, to some extent, that time's beliefs in empirical science, idealism, the balefulness of religion and myth, and the improvement of society through education.[21] Indeed, Edward A. Martin has characterized the debunkers as "cultural muckrakers" in their extension of the muckrakers' critique of political and social matters to those of a moral and cultural nature.[22]

Like many of the debunkers, Stefansson was originally from the Midwest, and like them he had chosen to live in New York City's Greenwich Village, the ground zero of social, cultural, and intellectual ferment in that era.[23] He derived great pleasure from the central muckraking action of smashing pernicious but fraudulent beliefs. However, unlike Mencken and many of the debunkers, Stefansson embraced rural America and its audiences; he spent many years on the Chatauqua and other lecture circuits that criss-crossed the countryside. His belief in a truly mass

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[20] Both quoted in Rodgers, *Iconoclast*, 306-7.

[21] Harold Brackman, "'Biography Yanked down out of Olympus': Beard, Woodward, and Debunking Biography," *Pacific Historical Review* 52 (1983): 414-15; Edward A. Martin, *H.L. Mencken and the Debunkers* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 75; T.J. Jackson Lears, "Ambivalent Victorian: H.L. Mencken," *The Wilson Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1989): 116. See Chip Wilson, *Structures of the Jazz Age: Mass Culture, Progressive Education, and Racial Discourse in American Modernism* (London and New York: Verso, 1998) for an analysis of post-war Progressivism, particularly as it pertained to educational matters.

[22] Martin, *Debunkers*, 26-27.

[23] Ibid., 20. More than any other biographer of Stefansson, Gísli Pálsson considers Stefansson's entrenchment in Greenwich Village and its effects upon his thinking and activities. See Pálsson, *Travelling Passions: The Hidden Life of Vilhjalmur Stefansson*, trans. Keneva Kunz (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005), chapter 8.

education, no matter the location of the audience, may have been augmented by pragmatic considerations. The myths about the Arctic circulating in the 1920s were so widespread and well-engrained that he simply could not afford to be choosy about his listeners. Conversely, his listeners had a choice whether or not to accept his arguments. Inevitably, some did not; decades later, others still have not.

This chapter cannot embark upon an investigation of Stefansson's campaign for Arctic truth without considering a major caveat that much recent writing on Stefansson has raised—that his works on the Arctic, particularly his travelogues, were not entirely truthful. Stefansson himself admitted that he was prone to misrepresentation and exaggeration, especially when expounding upon his favourite topic, the Arctic's purported friendliness.[24] Scholars have unearthed and made public the diaries and narratives of other members of the Canadian Arctic Expedition that challenge and occasionally refute Stefansson's version of events in *The Friendly Arctic*.[25] Moreover, the level of rigour in his scientific fieldwork and subsequent arctic endeavours has been rightly contested. The concept of rigour is historically variable, however, and such discussions often implicitly or explicitly adjudicate the propriety of various practices of scientific fieldwork at the same time as they make claims about the determination of accuracy and truth. Richard Diubaldo writes, for example, that "Stefansson always claimed he was in pursuit of the truth through scientific investigation but, when he forsook pure scientific pursuits, the truth sometimes suffered. He seemed oblivious of this metamorphosis."[26]

However, it would be wrong to conclude that Stefansson and truth are always and necessarily antithetical things that cannot be studied in conjunction.[27] Stefansson supported most of the facts that he used in his debunking campaigns with testimonies, records, or

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[24] Hunt, *Stef*, 226; Richard J. Diubaldo, *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 27-28.

[25] Stuart Jenness has accomplished particularly excellent work in this regard. See Diamond Jenness, *Arctic Odyssey: The Diary of Diamond Jenness, 1913-1916*, ed. Stuart Jenness (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991); Stuart Jenness, "Conflicts and Adversities: The Southern Party of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-16," *The Beaver* 76, no. 4 (1996): 34-41; Stuart Jenness, *The Making of an Arctic Explorer*: *George Hubert Wilkins and the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1916* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Diamond Jenness and Stuart E. Jenness, *Through Darkening Spectacles: Memoirs of Diamond Jenness* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2008).

[26] Diubaldo, *Canadian Arctic*, 213. See also Trevor H. Levere, *Science and the Canadian Arctic: A Century of Exploration, 1818-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), chapter 10.

[27] This position is not a hypothetical one. After I had given a presentation based on my doctoral research at a session of the Canadian Historical Association's annual meeting in 2008, one audience member who had also done some research on Stefansson asked me how I could trust anything Stefansson said, given that he lied all the time.

literature produced by other scientists or scientific bodies.[28] He did not rely merely upon his own observations and experiences, and indeed castigated other explorers that did so.[29] Furthermore, when examining Stefansson's writings, it is also essential to distinguish between the facts he cites and his interpretations of those facts. It is true, as he contended, that most of the Arctic is not perennially covered in ice and snow, that the summers enjoy some warmth, and that flowers and wildlife do exist therein. But these facts do not automatically call forth embroidered visions of an arctic paradise for everyone as they did for him. The failure of several of his arctic enterprises that were predicated too much upon interpretation and too little upon fact would seem to underscore this point especially well.[30]

Finally, one must recall that the image of the Arctic in the minds of Americans and Canadians of the 1920s was much harsher than the reality experienced by those who lived there, especially given the tendency of some arctic travellers and explorers to exaggerate hardships and thereby to increase the heroism of their deeds. As Stefansson's own granddaughter Georgina, who lives in Inuvik, noted, "Like, in the nineteen-twenties this was like no man's land. And the only stories that they could get were from people who came up here."[31] Stefansson's overenthusiastic gestures in the opposite direction were made partly in the hope of righting this balance. His friend Edward Weyer noted that "if at times in his descriptions of the Arctic, the tundra appeared a bit more poppy-strewn than some thought typical, or warmer than they had sometimes felt it, we should remember how long the debt to truth was owing."[32] Recognizing that beliefs could materially affect people's actions and perceptions, Stefansson wanted to foster in Americans, at the very least, the ability to contemplate that the Arctic might be something other than a frozen hell on earth. Only then, he believed, would scientists and

[28] His attributions are often casual rather than formal, but see Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "Some Erroneous Ideas of Arctic Geography," *Geographical Review* 12, no. 2 (1922): 264-77, as an example of the latter. Many of the themes of this article subsequently appear again in Stefansson's other debunking articles.

[29] He had developed this critique by 1908. See Stefansson, "Wintering among the Eskimos," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 117, no. 697 (1908): 38-48. A cogent and mature expression of Stefansson's views on the subject is Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "Travellers' Tales," in *Adventures in Error* (New York: Robert M. McBride and Co., 1936), 88-135.

[30] See Diubaldo, *Canadian Arctic*, chapters 7 and 8.

[31] Quoted in Pálsson, *Travelling Passions*, 230. Earlier in her statement, Georgina placed her grandfather on the side of those who told tall tales rather than the truth: "Like, he could tell a story down south the way he wanted it to be. And nobody could check. I guess forever. ... So he had all sorts of stories that people could believe because they weren't here."

[32] Edward Weyer Jr., "On Vilhjalmur Stefansson," *Explorers' Journal* 41, no. 2 (1963): 8.

travellers have the right mindset to gain reliable and truthful knowledge about the region. "Why be mystical about the Arctic when we are scientific about all the other oceans?" he wondered.[33]

Debunking the Arctic

Stefansson's debunking of the Arctic first came to the widespread attention of the public in his popular account of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, which was published under the consciously provocative title *The Friendly Arctic* in 1921.[34] A fellow explorer, J.M. Wordie, termed the text "original in treatment, and ... quite frankly heterodox. The author throughout ... is out to fight and if possible demolish the idea that the Arctic has either its discomforts or its dangers beyond the ordinary."[35] The book's central thesis was that explorers did not need to make extensive outlays of supplies at numerous depots in order to accomplish arctic travel successfully. Rather, with the acquisition of some skills native to the Inuit, they could live off the land's animal, vegetal, and mineral bounty, no matter their precise location in the Arctic. One can already perceive glimpses of the extended argument Stefansson would make the following year in *The Northward Course of Empire*: that the Arctic was not only friendly to explorers, but, indeed, to all hard-working, open-minded citizens of modern-day advanced industrial civilizations.[36] Stefansson buttressed both these arguments, particularly the latter, with his own first-hand experiential observations, as well as a plethora of geographical, meteorological, botanical,

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[33] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "The Resources of the Arctic and the Problem of Their Utilization," in *Problems of Polar Research*, ed. W.L.G. Joerg (New York: American Geographical Society, 1928), 223.

[34] However, Stefansson's earliest overt attempt at debunking the Arctic appears to be Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "Misconceptions about Life in the Arctic," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 45, no. 1 (January 1913): 17-32. Portions of *The Friendly Arctic* were previously published as a series of articles in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in America and England and in *Maclean's* in Canada, under the series title "Solving the Problem of the Arctic." The American references are as follows: Stefansson, "A Record of Five Years' Exploration," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 138, no. 827 (April 1919): 577-90; Stefansson, "Ways and Means of Life on the Ice," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 138, no. 828 (May 1919): 721-35; Stefansson, "Drifting to Banks Island—The Arrival of the *Mary Sachs*," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 139, no. 829 (June 1919): 36-47; Stefansson, "Hunting Caribou and Building Snow Houses," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 139, no. 830 (July 1919): 193-203; Stefansson, "Our First Discovery of New Land," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 139, no. 831 (August 1919): 386-98; Stefansson, "Conclusion—Further Discoveries of New Land," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 139, no. 833 (October 1919): 709-20. See Cavell, "Print Culture," 32, fn56 for the Canadian publication references.

[35] Wordie, review of *The Friendly Arctic* by Stefansson, 470.

[36] *Northward Course* was based on a series of articles that had appeared in *World's Work* in America and Britain, and, in slightly modified form, in *Maclean's* in Canada. The American references are as follows: Stefansson, "Northward the Course of Empire," *World's Work* 43, no. 1 (November 1921): 35-40; Stefansson, "The North That Never Was," *World's Work* 43, no. 2 (December 1921): 188-200; Stefansson, "The Fruitful Arctic," *World's Work* 43, no. 3 (January 1922): 313-26; Stefansson, "The Livable North," *World's Work* 43, no. 4 (February 1922): 440-48. Versions of the first two articles also appeared in *Reader's Digest* in 1922. For the full publication references, see Robert W. Mattila, *A Chronological Bibliography of the Published Works of Vilhjalmur Stefansson* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Libraries, 1978), 32-33.

zoological, anthropological, and other scientific records and facts. Marshalled in strict rank and file, these facts provided what Stefansson hoped was irrefutable proof that the spectre of the unfriendly Arctic had arisen primarily through deliberate mythmaking and innocuous misunderstanding. As these two books were at the core of Stefansson's debunking efforts, so they will form the basis for the following discussion.

In the first two chapters of *The Friendly Arctic* and in the first half of *Northward Course*, Stefansson employs an argumentative style that the literary critic Sherrill Grace has termed, *avant la lettre*, deconstructionist.[37] Having first shown the provenance of erroneous ideas and beliefs about the North, he goes on to destroy them completely. In *Northward Course*'s second half, the arc of his reasoning climbs from negative into positive realms. He constructs a bountiful, pleasant, and productive vision of the Arctic and of its potential future in place of the barren and harsh land he has just demolished. This deconstructive-reconstructive formula was the basic structure upon which all of Stefansson's arctic debunking rested, although his straight debunking exercises frequently employed only the first half. The essential theme of the friendly Arctic, in Stefansson's able hands, was rendered as expandable or as contractible as desired. It could fill an 800-page travelogue, or a one-page article in *The Spectator* or *Collier's*. It could be adjusted to any audience, whether teachers, mechanical engineers, rural improvers, or undifferentiated lecture hall patrons. It could support as many or as few facts as Stefansson had time, space, or inclination to set forth, and those facts were available in a variety of disciplinary flavours.

Matching the stability of this theme was a uniform set of four arguments, a partial or whole version of which often appears in his debunking efforts. This can be considered Stefansson's debunking manifesto, which ran as follows. Predicting, correctly, that his audience would receive his claims with skepticism, Stefansson first proffered a specific theory of knowledge to render his argument more palatable. He conjured the vision of a "University of Polite Unlearning," first suggested by his Harvard instructor, the Unitarian minister Samuel McChord Crothers, that people could attend to "unlearn" all of the untrue things they had been taught in formal education.[38] Stefansson rhetorically opened the doors to the arctic division of this imaginary institution. He declared that the public needed to unlearn their ideas about the Arctic before they were ready to accept the truth he had to communicate: that the land of eternal ice, everlasting winter, and intense cold, absent of light, life, and happiness was a

[37] Sherrill E. Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 7.
[38] Stefansson, *Northward Course*, 20-22.

The Landscape
The North Pole is the most inaccessible place in the Arctic. (*FA*, 8-11)
All of the Arctic is permanently covered in snow or ice. (*FA*, 11-13)
It is always cold in the Arctic, even during the summer. (*FA*, 13-16)
The Arctic is devoid of vegetation, or has only mosses and lichens as vegetation. (*FA*, 16-17)
The Arctic is a land of perpetual silence. (*FA*, 19-20)
The North Pole is the coldest place in the world. / Cold necessarily increases with latitude. (*NC*, 22-28)
The Arctic is the region of heaviest snowfall in the world. (*NC*, 40-41)
The Arctic / the north polar sea is devoid of wildlife. (*FA*, 17-19)
The Explorer
Eating snow endangers one's health. (*Misc* 29-31)
It is impossible to sleep in the snow or in a blizzard without endangering one's life. (*FA*, 455)
Frostbite can be cured by the application of snow to the affected area. (*Misc* 31-32)
Snowblindness is a kind of blindness. (*FA*, 201)
It is impossible to live entirely off the country in the Arctic. (*FA*)
People can never learn to like the Arctic winter. / The days of little sunlight are to be dreaded. (*NC*, 84-92)
The Inuit
All Inuit live in snowhouses (igloos). (*Ign*)
The interior of a snowhouse is kept below the freezing point. (*Ign*)
Inuit drink oil for sustenance. / Inuit drink oil when they are thirsty. (*Spec*)

Figure 3.1. **Some Typical Arctic "Facts" Debunked By Stefansson.** The above table lists some typical fallacies about the Arctic that Stefansson exposed and debunked in his lectures and articles between 1913 and 1937. Where the statement is found neither in *The Friendly Arctic* (*FA*) or *The Northward Course of Empire* (*NC*), then the reference given is for its first known extended statement in the debunking literature. *Misc* = "Misconceptions About Life in the Arctic." *Ign* = "Educated Ignorance," *Collier's*, 24 February 1923, 25. *Spec* = "Popular Errors. VI. That Eskimos Drink Oil," *The Spectator*, 9 February 1924, 194-196.

concatenation of myths and ill-founded suppositions handed down through western civilization over tens, hundreds, or even thousands of years.

Stefansson would then sometimes express regret that his debunking might have certain negative consequences: "[I]t appears a sort of vandalism to destroy the glamorous and heroic North by too intimate knowledge...." However, he considered that the results were worth the pain: "Every geographic discoverer must plead guilty to making the world poorer in romance. He does so in exact proportion as he makes it richer in knowledge."[39] Moreover, he anticipated, and often confirmed, that the hardest task he faced was convincing people to relinquish their

[39] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *The Friendly Arctic: The Story of Five Years in Polar Regions* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 8, 687.

dreams of an imaginary Arctic. "Man," he wrote knowingly, "finds it easier to change the face of nature than to change his own mind."[40] Yet Stefansson reiterated that it was absolutely essential to tear down this "wall of misinformation," no matter how long the deed took.[41] As long as it stood, it would inhibit widespread participation in the imperial and colonial vision which he had laid out in *The Friendly Arctic* and *Northward Course*: the erection of northern "stately cities and empires of productivity" necessary to support the needs of a growing world population.[42] This was a powerful new imaginative representation of the North that Stefansson offered, against all precedent, as a possible future reality, based on the fruits of his exploration in that region.

This interlinking array of messages—theory, objection, counteraction, vision—was sometimes directed to a particular audience, that of teachers and their students. Even in his general addresses, Stefansson paid special attention to education's role in creating public knowledge about the Arctic, and he often traced the public's initial seeds of ignorance to statements made in school classrooms. He reasoned that if the citizens of the future were taught the truth about the Arctic in the first instance, they might be more likely to accept and act upon his ideas once they became adults. Accordingly, throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, he published debunking articles and interviews in various journals concerned with education, pedagogy, and childhood, and gave lectures to conferences of educators.[43] Passages in his articles and books also extol the merits of the intelligent young men who were his arctic travelling companions, and praise especially their eagerness to learn and their adaptability to new ideas and practices.[44]

Some young men responded just as enthusiastically to Stefansson. John J. Teal Jr. contended that Stefansson's appeal lay in his logical yet transformative system of thought about the Arctic, which appeared to be "the unabashed philosophy of eternal youth, complete with revolt and optimism. ... No greater admiration from young men may be had than for one who

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[40] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *The Friendly Arctic: The Story of Five Years in the Polar Regions*, revised ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1944), 713.
[41] Stefansson, *Northward Course*, 41.
[42] Stefansson, *Friendly Arctic* (1921), 670.
[43] E.g. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "The Friendly Arctic," *Michigan State Teachers' Association Quarterly Review* 5, no. 1 (February 1923): 1-5; Stefansson, "The Friendly Eskimo," *The Mentor* 15, no. 1 (February 1927): 36-40; Stefansson, "Noashak's Growing Up," *The American Girl* 10, no. 3 (March 1927), 12-13, 42; Stefansson and Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, "Teaching the Truth about the Arctic," *American Childhood*, 14, no. 5 (January 1929): 5-8, 62-63; Stefansson, "Abolishing the Arctic," *School and Community* 16, no. 2 (February 1930): 105-11; Stefansson, "Eskimos," *Teachers' World*, 8 October 1930, 74-75; Stefansson, "The Truth about the Arctic," *Teachers' World*, 24 September 1930, 1013, 1037, 1050.
[44] Stefansson, *Friendly Arctic* (1921), 64-65, 100, 472; Stefansson, "Further Discoveries," 712.

will formulate his own theory contrary to the prevailing opinion of authorities and then test it with his own life."[45] While most young men admired Stefansson purely on an intellectual level, one extremely tragic, and fortunately atypical consequence of his debunking campaign was the deaths of four young men on Stefansson's Wrangel Island expedition (1921-24). These men tested Stefansson's theory with their lives; unlike Stefansson himself, they did not survive the experiment.[46] The ramifications of belief or disbelief in the friendly Arctic were usually not so severe. Despite the blow to his reputation and his theory, Stefansson continued to debunk the region, though now more prominently in the United States than in Canada, where popular opinion had cooled toward him significantly in the disaster's aftermath.

How to make the Arctic (seem) friendly

Notwithstanding his attractiveness to youth, Stefansson caught most of his readers and listeners in the fullness of adulthood, with fully-formed, and, he thought, fully erroneous ideas about the Arctic. Within his debunking oeuvre, there regularly surface certain rhetorical strategies designed to dilute the wells of misinformation that nourished his audience's resistance to his arguments. As if reading their minds, he sometimes explicitly named these reasons for doubt even as he strove subtly to negate them. The four strategies that will be considered here are those of readerly identification, transparency, challenge to authority, and humour.

One major obstacle to a correct understanding of the Arctic, Stefansson contended, was the very distance of most people from the region. He agreed that it was easy to believe in the popular opinion that the Arctic was a frozen wasteland of little value; after all, most people would never have the opportunity to travel there and test their assumptions at first hand. More importantly, even if they had the chance to do so, they might lack the desire to puncture their illusions and to deprive their imagination of some unscientific place where it might roam freely. Therefore, he endeavoured to identify himself with the reader. Having once been in the same position, he could allay the reader's doubts through his own experiences, and represent the Arctic to them in terms that they, as southerners, could appreciate. His knowledge of their misknowledge came from his own misadventures in education:

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[45] John J. Teal Jr., "Adventures in Possibility: Stefansson's Challenge to Youth," *Polar Notes*, no. 4 (November 1962): 38-39.

[46] Jennifer Niven gives the most recent account of the Wrangel Island disaster in her book *Ada Blackjack: A True Story of Survival in the Arctic* (New York: Hyperion, 2003). See also Diubaldo, *Canadian Arctic*, chapter 8, and Melody Webb, "Arctic Saga: Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Attempt to Colonize Wrangel Island," *Pacific Historical Review* 61 (1992): 215-39.

> If the average American or European university graduate has ten ideas about the North, nine of them are wrong. So far as the victims of American education are concerned, I know from experience. ... [D]uring the period of my formal and informal education I absorbed the same general type of misinformation as does the average American. When I went North and became an explorer I found that nine out of ten of my ideas about the polar regions were wrong, and from that I infer that if you are an honor graduate of some university you are probably in as bad a case. ... With the initial advantage of knowing what the reader or listener thinks he knows about the North (for I knew those things myself once and believed them until I went North and found they were not true), I proceed as follows to demolish his misknowledge.[47]

Stefansson's case against his former self grew darker when he revealed that he had not only believed those wrong ideas, but had taught them to students as well when he had been a Harvard instructor in the early 1900s.[48] His confessions alleviated any sense of guilt or embarrassment the reader might have felt at realizing that he had put his faith in falsehoods. Moreover, Stefansson deliberately put himself forward as a model of conversion that others could follow.

With some semblance of readerly identification now established, Stefansson would then present the Arctic as seen through the eyes of a convert, often by comparison to how he might have seen it before (and, by implication, how his readers were still inclined to see it). "My first year in the Arctic," he wrote, "I saw everything through a haze of romance and did not for a while realize that it was a very commonplace country."[49] This was a tricky rhetorical move, as it risked muting readerly interest altogether. Stefansson compensated for his "bizarre" emphasis on the humdrum and common, however, with lucid, well-written, and ultimately fascinating and enjoyable prose.[50] Some of these flashes of vividness came as part of a further strategy of readerly identification, one which involved drawing direct parallels between the unfamiliar north and familiar south. The rolling hills of Banks Island reminded Stefansson of "western Dakota or eastern Montana," and the Arctic, he thought, more closely resembled Michigan or Switzerland than the image of popular belief.[51] Furthermore, he advanced prosaic notions such that the navigation of a supposed "wilderness" was no different from a walk down a busy city street, and that eating snow in the Arctic was not much different from eating sherbet in your

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[47] Stefansson, *Northward Course*, 20, 22.
[48] Stefansson, "Abolishing the Arctic," 105-6.
[49] Stefansson, *Northward Course,* 48. See also Stefansson, *Friendly Arctic* (1921), 22, 445-46; Stefansson, "The Royal Road to Humdrum," in *Told at the Explorers' Club*, ed. F.A. Blossom (London: George G. Harrap, 1932), 295-307.
[50] Diubaldo, *Canadian Arctic*, 28.
[51] Stefansson, "Drifting to Banks Island," 40; Stefansson, *Friendly Arctic* (1921), 239, 687.

own boardinghouse.[52] By this arresting conjunction of the adventurous and the mundane, he sought to replace the former with the latter in people's imaginings of the North.

In the tradition of other travellers- and explorers-turned-authors, Stefansson also strove to heighten the readerly perception of veracity by giving the impression of transparency in his records of events.[53] He might lay out the entire chain of reasoning that had led him to a specific conclusion or course of action, carefully noting both its benefits and drawbacks, in order that the reader might, if he or she wished, check every link to ensure that Stefansson's logic was secure.[54] A sense of full disclosure was promulgated in other small gestures. At one point in *The Friendly Arctic*, he emphasized a trivial discrepancy between two factual statements precisely to draw attention to how errors might creep into his account. He then begged his readers' global forgiveness for such transgressions: "I have no doubt that a keen critic can find such discrepancies and perhaps more serious ones either in this book or between it and something else I have written. But I hope that every such discrepancy is open to a reasonably charitable interpretation."[55] Other passages of the book are derived directly, Stefansson says, from the pages of his diary, in order that his readers might have access to his exact contemporaneous thoughts: "In general I am telling this story at it appeared to me at the time, giving each situation as it then seemed and without throwing upon it any light which was not then available."[56] In these ways, Stefansson fostered the impression that his accounts contained an unmediated, sometimes even replicable kind of truth.

Related to textual transparency is the issue of textual authority. Stefansson was well aware that, with respect to the information that explorers brought back from little-known places, the convention was to assent to the truth of their observations on the basis of trust in

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[52] Stefansson, *Friendly Arctic* (1921), 81; Stefansson, "What Do You Know." Johannes Fabian notes that the verisimilar displacement of the reader to the traveller's side is a textual strategy used to enhance the authority of the expeditionary narrative. See Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 254.

[53] The association between travel writing and the fabrication of experience in faraway lands has been extensively discussed. A classic statement of this argument is Percy Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962).

[54] E.g. Stefansson, *Friendly Arctic* (1921), 126-38; Stefansson, *Northward Course*, 84-94. Stefansson also used this rhetorical strategy frequently in his semi-scholarly studies of discrete arctic and northern hoaxes. See Stefansson, *Adventures in Error*, chapters 5, 7, and 8.

[55] Stefansson, *Friendly Arctic* (1921), 321.

[56] Ibid., 627. Earlier in his account, he characterizes this compositional decision as made in deference to the reader's sensibilities and preferences: "I have assumed that the reader would be interested in the feelings and outlook he might have shared had he been with us, rather than in direct facts as they appear now that time has settled uncertainties and reversed contemporary judgments." Ibid., 556. However, note also Stefansson's contrasting treatment of material on page 645: "I shall tell the story not entirely as I understood it then but with certain side lights of later information."

their perceptual and technical abilities. In *Northward Course*, while still asserting his right to rest his conclusions on the traditional mode of first-hand observation, he also sets himself apart from common exploratory practice by offering independent verification of his claims:

> Apparently on my mere say-so, the following chapter asserts about the North various things which are the opposite of common beliefs. ... Even those who might have admitted that ten years beyond the polar circle, traveling on the average two thousand miles per year on foot, had given me ample opportunity to study conditions up there, could still have questioned my veracity or my judgment, if not both. But now we can get in one place and in compact form weighty if not conclusive support for enough of the more essential statements of this chapter so that the reader will be inclined to say: 'Since the points of the argument which I can check have full support, the rest of the argument and the conclusions are probably all right.'[57]

Still leading the reader by the hand, Stefansson points out a possible source of discrepancy between his account and the one he cites, and of bias on his part: "You may find the report more soberly worded as to conclusions and recommendations, for I know and love the North and Doctor Rutherford judges it merely by testimony. But you will find the facts the same in this book and in the report...."[58] When added to Stefansson's tendency to mention scholarly and scientific sources prominently in his work, Stefansson's arguments enjoy the strong appearance of truth.

Yet Stefansson neither allowed himself nor other experts the luxury of a comfortable rest on any kind of laurels. In many of his debunking pieces, Stefansson questions and successfully refutes the arctic knowledge demonstrated by those who might have been thought to speak with authority, including eminent scientists, the authors of educational textbooks, and professional historians.[59] Once again, he traces the origin of their false beliefs back to the education they received in primary, secondary, and post-secondary classrooms. Debunking a statement about icebergs made by the Secretary of the Royal Society, for example, he recommends that the man not be too greatly censured, for "when he was a boy at school someone taught him geography as it is frequently taught today, from a book. He was misinformed and has never happened to discover it since."[60]

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[57] Stefansson, *Northward Course*, 42.
[58] Ibid., 44-45.
[59] E.g. Ibid., 45; Stefansson, "How Habitable Is Northern Canada?", *Maclean's*, 1 January 1922, 23; Stefansson, "Authentic Comparisons of Temperatures in the Arctic, Western Canada and Western States Reveal the Striking Misconceptions of Some Authors," *Canadian Elk Magazine* 5, no. 1 (November 1929), 3; Stefansson, "Northern Ice Caps," *Canadian Elk Magazine* 5, no. 2 (December 1929), 5; Stefansson, "Abolishing the Arctic," 105-9; Stefansson, "Travellers' Tales."
[60] Stefansson and Bailey, "Teaching the Truth," 5.

Another frequent target of his scorn was his fellow explorers, whom he criticized for their willingness or their lassitude in allowing the erroneous representation of the Arctic to continue. One of the liveliest instances of this critique came in an address that Stefansson delivered to a convention of the Missouri School Teachers Association in November 1929. Answering a question he had put to himself—why, if the things you say about the Arctic are true, do so many people still believe in the common falsehoods, and why are these falsehoods still found in textbooks and encyclopedias?—Stefansson gives the following soliloquy, worth quoting at length:

> We explorers are to blame. .... It isn't so much we have been trying to deceive the public. It is rather we have not been trying so very hard to undeceive them. And why do you suppose? Why, I think it is because it pays to be a hero. Heroism pays. It pays for the explorers to have the public believe that the Far North is such a dangerous and such a dreadful place that not one would go there unless he were a combination of a hero and a martyr. ....
>
> We are all fond of heroes and we never have quite enough of them and the greatest hero factory in the world always has been the Far North. All you have to do to be a hero is just go there. The public already knows what a dreadful place it is; they are already selfdeceived; they know about the eternal silence and darkness and cold and desolation. In their minds it is an awful place; it stands to reason that none but heroes would go there. And so if I want to be a hero all I really have to do is to go North and stay for awhile and come back and certify to the public that I have really been there and the public is then in a frame of mind to worship me for my heroism and the chances are if I don't brag too much about it, they will admire me for my modesty in addition. All I really have to do is to refrain from giving the game away. But you see I am not refraining. I am giving the game away to the best of my ability. ...
>
> There used to be a time when none but heroes like myself went to the Far North, but now ordinary people like you are beginning to go. Men with their wives and families and that is spoiling our game. .... Why now I ask you what is a hero like me to do in a case like that? Luckily I saw the trouble coming a few years ago and I said to myself I might just as well be one of the first and give the game away since it has got to be done in any case.[61]

By writing and delivering such critiques in an overtly humorous manner, Stefansson rendered himself less open to accusations that he was seriously challenging the credibility of his professional counterparts.[62] He was hardly the first person in the 1920s to lampoon the popular image of the exploring fraternity. Richard Byrd's flight to the North Pole, for instance, when combined with his extravagant and dramatic personality, attracted the satirical ridicule of

[61] Stefansson, "Abolishing the Arctic," 111.

[62] Hunt notes that Stefansson's encounters with most explorers were both professional and cordial, and that Stefansson tried to be even-handed in any criticisms he did make. He aimed to quell rather than to fan animosity. Hunt, *Stef*, 215.

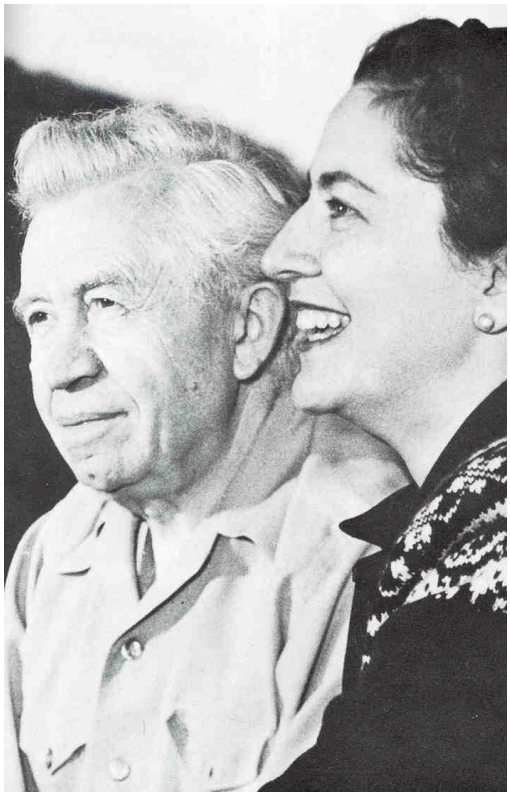

Figure 3.2. Vilhjalmur and Evelyn Stefansson share a moment of good humour. Credit: Stefansson Arctic Institute.

debunkers.[63] Still, it was an action less expected from explorers themselves, particularly one who had once been the president of the Explorers Club. Few explorers seemed to have felt secure enough about their personal credibility, especially in light of their caricatures by the press, and their place in history to provoke laughs at their own expense in public. Moreover, in the wake of the Cook-Peary controversy, the matter of explorers lying was not something about which American explorers felt predisposed to laugh. Stefansson's display of a vibrant sense of humour about his own profession was therefore a significant departure from normal public performances of exploratory identity at that time. One wonders if his fellow club members perceived that Stefansson was laughing as much at himself and his own heroic image as at anyone else.

Humour, then, was the final weapon in Stefansson's arsenal against those who refused to countenance the improbable vision of a friendly Arctic. Of course, humour was also an essential part of the debunking enterprise, as Woodward described memorably: "You put new ideas over by making people laugh. All new ideas are looked upon as dangerous, and people

[63] Martin, *Debunkers*, 104-5.

fight them as they fight tigers. But all clowns are considered harmless. So you get a man laughing and before he knows it you've passed your idea on to him."[64] Stefansson's lecturing technique was described similarly in an advertising press sheet:

> His wit is keen; ripples of laughter sweep through his audience as they wonder why they have until that very moment accepted without question a lot of pseudo-science that was originally invented for the ancient Greeks. After laughing at themselves awhile, they go home with an entirely new conception of the North, and therefore a new conception, too, of the world as a whole.[65]

Whether or not the outcome of his lectures was always and really as represented—and notwithstanding the fact that people may have been laughing *at* Stefansson rather than *with* him—Stefansson's sense of humour cannot be contested.[66] His debunking was spiced with witty turns of phrase, too few of which have been able to find space in this chapter. Although the focus of analysis so far has been on the ways in which Stefansson tried to ensure that his debunking campaign was a success, it was failure—his own, that of other explorers, and that of his society—that most often whetted his appetite for satire.

Can an arctic explorer be funny?

Evelyn Stefansson found lacking in herself the faculty to describe two of her husband's most important features, one of which was his sense of humour.[67] Fortunately for posterity, there exist a smattering of references to it among the writings of Stefansson's friends and acquaintances, where it is described as dry, biting, keen, somewhat sardonic, and ironic. The saving grace of this prickly side to his personality, as mentioned above, was that he was always ready to laugh at his own failings.[68] Stefansson admitted ruefully that his fondness for irony was not widely shared, particularly when it surfaced as an element of his victories over other intellectual positions. It was this aspect of his personality "that was often misunderstood and which sometimes produced anger in those on the other side of the idea," according to Evelyn.[69]

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[64] Woodward, *Bunk*, 229.
[65] "Vilhjalmur Stefansson Press Sheet," Affiliated Lecture and Concert Association, c1930, found in Pam 92 [Stefansson, V.], Scott Polar Research Institute Library.
[66] Hunt notes the humour with which some members of the public greeted the notion of a friendly Arctic in *Stef*, 155-57.
[67] Evelyn Stefansson, "Postlude," in Stefansson, *Discovery*, 398.
[68] Constance L. Skinner, "Stefansson: Sentinel of Civilization," *Canadian Forum* 7, no. 73 (October 1926): 399-400; W.G. Dean, "Vilhjalmur Stefansson (1879-1962)," *Canadian Geographer* 6, nos. 3-4 (1962): 95; Hunt, *Stef*, 160; Norman Amor, *Beyond the Arctic Circle* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Library, 1992), 10; Pálsson, *Travelling Passions*, 41, 187-88; Stefansson Nef, "Private Life," 23.
[69] Evelyn Stefansson Nef, "What Is a Visionary?", in Mattila, *Chronological Bibliography*, x.

An understanding of the complexity of this emotion in Stefansson is essential in order to analyze the nature and consequences of its operation.

In an unpublished essay, Stefansson once censured his friend, the Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock, for his unflattering representation of the Canadian Arctic in his volume of the "Chronicles of Canada" series. Part of the problem, Stefansson thought, was the mismatch between the author and his subject: "Leacock writing about heroism in the Arctic is like Mark Twain exhorting the American government against 'Imperialism' and iniquities in the Philippines—both are serious, want to be taken seriously and are exasperated when you laugh at their loftiest periods. They can't help being funny."[70] The issue, when inverted, becomes of great relevance to this discussion. If a humorist could not be serious about exploration, could a (serious) explorer treat it with humour? Could an explorer be successfully perceived as funny? This is no idle question, for it derives from a real situation of misunderstanding in which Stefansson once found himself. The affirmative answer to this question may have inspired him to try his hand more directly at satire, a genre which was enjoying a wave of popularity in the America of the 1920s, largely because of the man to whom Stefansson had directed his query—H.L. Mencken.

Stefansson and Mencken seem to have met at the mutual height of their respective popularity and public visibility in the early 1920s. The two had many things in common. Born just one year apart, they were both marked by the Victorian era in which they had attained maturity, and both hid romantic, emotional, and idealistic Progressive sensibilities beneath their witty, devil-may-care veneers of Jazz Age sophistication. Both took Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer as intellectual guiding-lights, and in them found inspiration for their rejection of religious beliefs and their fierce devotion to truth. They knew very well that most people preferred elegant and comfortable falsehoods to the raw revelations they liked to bring forth. Neither held many things sacred, and both enjoyed presenting their views in startling and dramatic fashion; indeed, it might certainly be said of Stefansson, as it was of Mencken, that he would much rather be wrong than boring.[71]

The two men each possessed an enormous number of correspondents, yet they found the time to exchange 55 letters between 1923 and 1942.[72] These reveal a friendly, if not very

[70] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "Explorers as Nature Fakers," unpublished MS, File 2, Box 14, MSS 98, RSC. He is referring to Stephen Leacock, *Adventurers of the Far North: A Chronicle of the Frozen Seas* (Toronto: Brook and Company, 1914).
[71] Fitzpatrick, *Mencken*, 29.
[72] Rodgers, *Iconoclast*, 231.

intimate relationship enlivened by ironic witticisms on themes of mutual interest, such as their enjoyment of the ridiculous elements of American society and their skepticism about religion and patriotic nationalism. On the receipt of a letter from Stefansson that transcribed a nonsensical portion of a speech given by a certain Cambridge don, Mencken replied, "Sir Arthur Eddington is one of my favorite characters in fiction. I always read his philosophical pronunciamentos with great joy. Each new one leaves me a better American, and a better Methodist. ... [M]any of his sweetest announcements are almost unintelligible."[73] Some years later, when Mencken realized that he had forgotten to send Stefansson a copy of one of his books, he wrote in mock sorrow, "I hope you forgive me, as our Heavenly Father undoubtedly does. I spent my birthday, as usual, in prayer and meditation."[74] Stefansson was equally willing to pull Mencken's leg. "Being simple, you would never guess why I am writing you this letter," he once prefaced a request.[75]

Their correspondence began just prior to the founding of *The American Mercury*, a magazine of social and literary commentary that Mencken and his frequent collaborator George Jean Nathan had created along with the publisher Alfred A. Knopf. Sometime in the autumn of 1923, a mutual friend of Stefansson and Mencken, the biologist Dr. Raymond Pearl, had read a satirical piece by Stefansson proposing the standardization of all scientific knowledge. Knowing of Mencken's new magazine, Pearl gave the piece, without Stefansson's name attached, to Mencken for consideration. Once Mencken had discovered the author's identity, he wrote to Stefansson, expressing his delight at the piece and asking if the *Mercury* could publish it under his real name. Mencken acknowledged that, while pseudonymous articles were sometimes necessary, "surely not in this case! The article is excellent stuff."[76] Stefansson's reply revealed concern about this turn toward satire, based on a previous and not entirely successful attempt at writing subtle humour. A year earlier, he had reviewed Walter E. Traprock's *My Northern Exposure: The* Kawa *at the Pole* (1922), a satirical spoof on the narratives of polar exploration, for the *New York Times*. "So far as I realized," Stefansson explained,

> there was not a serious line in the review but my name conferred such a solemnity upon the article that half a dozen friends of mine wrote me pointing out the impropriety of treating seriously a humorous book and saying that I should have reviewed it in a light vein if at all. Two or three of my humorist friends at that time suggested to me that if I ever wrote anything again intended

[73] Stefansson to Mencken, 9 September 1932, and Mencken in reply, 14 September 1932, MSS 196, RSC.
[74] Mencken to Stefansson, 16 September 1938, MSS 196, RSC.
[75] Stefansson to Mencken, 11 September 1938, MSS 196, RSC.
[76] Mencken to Stefansson, 5 December 1923, MSS 196, RSC.

> to be funny, I should do so under a pseudonym. Now I am letting your opinion outweigh the others.[77]

Unlike the *Times*, however, the *Mercury* was intended as an overtly satirical magazine, and was marketed to the educated, intelligent, and sophisticated segment of the American population. It gave Mencken a vehicle to continue the castigation of middle-class morality and the debunking of cherished beliefs for which he was, by then, so well known. In the editorial that accompanied the *Mercury*'s first issue, Mencken and Nathan took a humorously relativist stance on knowledge. They reassured readers that "the Editors are not fond enough to believe in their own varieties of truth too violently."[78] Their zeal to debunk was also made plain:

> THE AMERICAN MERCURY will devote itself pleasantly to exposing the nonsensicality of ... hallucinations, particularly when they show a certain apparent plausibility. Its own pet hallucination will take the form of a hypothesis that the progress of knowledge is less a matter of accumulating facts than a matter of destroying 'facts.' It will assume constantly that the more ignorant a man is the more he knows, positively and indignantly.[79]

Stefansson's attitudes on truth, debunking, and common ignorance, by coincidence or design, aligned perfectly with that of the *Mercury*'s editors, as will shortly be illustrated.

The *Mercury* was hailed as an important landmark in American literary publishing, and enjoyed its greatest success in its first five years. The first issue sold more than 15,000 copies and quickly became a collector's item; by 1927, its circulation figures approached 80,000 copies. At this height of the magazine's popularity, Stefansson contributed two more articles. One lampooned the relationship between "successful" exploration and good publicity, and the other exposed the myth of "wolf packs," which, Stefansson argued, roamed the newspapers more truthfully than the woods and tundra.[80] Although other contributors had to submit to editorial changes in order to align their pieces more precisely with the magazine's highly original tone, Stefansson's articles were so attuned to editorial sensibilities that they were always published exactly as he had composed them.[81] Moreover, despite the *Mercury*'s receipt of 600-700

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[77] Stefansson to Mencken, 11 December 1923, MSS 196, RSC. The citation for Stefansson's unfunny review is Vilhjalmur Stefansson, "A North Polar Parody. A Review by Vilhjalmur Stefansson," *New York Times*, 1 October 1922, 5, 12, 25, 29.

[78] "Editorial," *The American Mercury* 1, no. 1 (1924): 27.

[79] Ibid., 27-28.

[80] Stefansson, "Are Explorers to Join the Dodo?", *The American Mercury* 11, no. 41 (May 1927): 13-18; Stefansson, "The Wolf-Pack," *The American Mercury* 11, no. 43 (July 1927): 327-30.

[81] George Jean Nathan to Stefansson, 21 December 1923; Mencken to Stefansson, March 1927; Mencken to Stefansson, 17 March 1927; all MSS 196, RSC.

submissions each month, Mencken was very eager to solicit more essays from Stefansson, and mentioned this fact often in his letters.[82]

Stefansson's disinclination to acquiesce seems to have stemmed from economic motives. In one of his letters, with concern, he raised the issue of the *Mercury'*s low rate of pay compared to other magazines. On several occasions, he proposed to write a series of debunking articles for the *Mercury* at a higher price; once, he offered six articles, of between 1200-3000 words each, for $1000. Mencken replied that the magazine's layout could not accommodate this arrangement. He offered to take two or three pieces separately, but Stefansson seems never to have followed up on this compromise.[83] Although the *Mercury*'s excellent editorial courtesy, the prompt response to and payment of authors, and the prestige of appearing in its pages sufficiently compensated most contributors for its lower rates of pay, these features may not have tempted Stefansson adequately for him to forego higher profits elsewhere.[84]

The pleasures of standardizing error

With this short resume of H.L. Mencken's friendship, his business relationship with Stefansson, and the magazine that inspired and carried the latter's satirical inventions, the stage is set for an analysis of Stefansson's strangest literary production. His long essay *The Standardization of Error*, published in America in 1927 and in England in 1928, grew out of the first article that Stefansson had composed for the *Mercury*, then entitled "Every Science An Exact Science."[85] Stefansson expanded this piece several years later at the request of C.K. Ogden, the English publisher of *Psyche Magazine* and the editor of an associated book series of applied and general psychology, Psyche Miniatures. Incredibly, Stefansson came to regard this peculiar treatise as his favourite of the 33 books he had published, preferring it to even his successful and well-known arctic travelogues.[86] This fact alone suggests that the volume merits closer scrutiny than it has hitherto been granted.

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[82] Mencken to Stefansson, 22 April 1924, 12 July 1926, 1 December 1927, 5 September 1928, 2 October 1929, 8 May 1930, 29 February 1932, 14 September 1932, and 11 March 1933; all MSS 196, RSC.

[83] Stefansson to Mencken, 14 July 1926; Stefansson to Mencken, 10 March 1927 and Mencken in reply, 14 March 1927; Stefansson to Mencken, 31 August 1928, and Mencken in reply, 5 September 1928; all MSS 196, RSC. To put Stefansson's offer into perspective, the *Mercury*'s rate of pay was 2 cents per word for prose. Stefansson was therefore asking to be paid between three and eight times the magazine's normal rate, depending upon the total word count of the articles he would have produced.

[84] Daniel R. McCloskey to xchange list, 19 January 1994, http://ftp.spinnaker.com/liberty/docs/mencken.txt, "The American Mercury."

[85] Stefansson, "Every Science an Exact Science," *The American Mercury* 1, no. 3 (1924): 309-14.

[86] "Standardization of Error," File 37, Box 69, MSS 98, RSC; Teal, "Adventures in Possibility," 40; Stefansson Nef, "Visionary," x.

The lack of prior attention may arise partly from the difficulty of the book's classification. Stefansson once canvassed twenty libraries to discover the subject headings under which they had placed it, and received thirteen or fourteen different answers, including exploration, philosophy, theology, logic, and mathematics. He apparently found their confusion very amusing.[87] The book seems to have sold better in England than in the United States; even so, the testimonies of Stefansson's American friends suggests that it had some impact there as well.[88] The anthropologist Edward Weyer recalled that it was required reading in one of his graduate courses at Yale, and the poet Raymond Holden testified that several public figures had borrowed ideas from the book without acknowledgement.[89] John Teal suggested that out of all of Stefansson's books, "this book was addressed to youth and from youth drew its greatest response." He asserted that it was Stefansson's most popular book among young men.[90]

A brief look at the main characteristics of satire will help both to situate and evaluate Stefansson's longest coherent foray into this genre. According to George Test, satire is comprised of four basic elements: attack or aggression, laughter or humour, play, and judgment. Much more than other types of literature, it is yoked to a specific time, place, and people, and it critiques their assumptions, beliefs, habits, conflicts, and problems. Furthermore, the audience must make the connection between the work and its context in order for the satire to be successful.[91] The case here under consideration suggests a third item that the audience must comprehend for the satire to be intelligible: the satirical character of the author. The evidence regarding contemporary audience response suggests that Stefansson's prior reputation as an explorer complicated the book's reception to some degree.

The title of the work, *The Standardization of Error*, gains vivid significance when the book is placed against the cultural background from which it emerged.[92] The meaning of the word "standardization" and the effects upon Americans of the process it signified was a matter

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[87] Stefansson Nef, "Visionary," x-xi.

[88] Although Stefansson claimed late in his life that a segment of reviewers had received the book as a spoof on Bertrand Russell's recently expounded views on education, there is no contemporary evidence to support this claim. Russell was, however, a leading author at the publishing house of W.W. Norton, Stefansson's American publisher, so the comparison may have arisen out of this kind of proximity. Stefansson further claimed that W.W. Norton deliberately scaled down its publicity and print run for the book once it was realized that it seemed to be making fun of one of their star authors. Once again, no other evidence confirms this assertion, so it should be treated cautiously. See "Standardization of Error," File 37, Box 69, MSS 98, RSC.

[89] Weyer, "On Vilhjalmur Stefansson," 9; Raymond P. Holden, "Explorer and Man of Letters," in *Arctic Terrestrial Science*, 28.

[90] Teal, "Adventures in Possibility," 39-40.

[91] George A. Test, *Satire: Spirit and Art* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991).

[92] One reviewer wrote that Stefansson "permits himself the satisfaction of a sly wink at American civilization in these pages. The wink is visible in the title itself...." Unsigned review of *The Standardization of Error,* by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 December 1927.

of active debate throughout the decade.[93] The term had originally denoted the unity of objects in manufacturing processes, but it had transcended that definition early in the 1920s and moved into a wider sphere of social discussion. There, it acquired negative connotations through its integration into a debate over the place of the individual, especially with respect to personal free will, choice, and agency, in modern American society. The growing prevalence and influence of methods of mass production, mass consumption, and mass communication prompted some social commentators to warn that such systems would eventually cause the decline of American individualism, which was regarded as a foundational part of the national culture. In its place would rise a so-called "democratic" and "equitable" mass culture that would produce identical, interchangeable citizens, just as its industrial and technological counterparts were already churning out identical, interchangeable objects.

In the eyes of scions of literature and the arts, the main drawback of this emerging mass culture was that it catered to the lowest common denominator in American society; eventually, they believed, it would lead to the overall decline of American cultural life. To counteract this dismal and homogenizing outcome, many, including Mencken and Stefansson, urged the fostering of a heterogeneous public space in which multiple ideas could clash and clamour, and in which, it was hoped, the truth would eventually win out. However, this was not the position that Stefansson took in his book-length examination of the concept. It has been noted that Stefansson often felt the need to test ideas and theories that most people took for granted. His dedication to the debunking enterprise has likewise been emphasized. One can therefore read *The Standardization of Error* as Stefansson humorously questioning and debunking his most basic assumption of all: that the pursuit of truth was ultimately worthwhile. In this sense, the book was his ultimate act of iconoclasm.[94]

To the casual reader, *The Standardization of Error* appears to be a work of popular philosophy, a genre not uncommon in the decade of its publication. It is divided into two sections: the first, shorter one is titled "The Basic Theory," and the second, longer one "The Practical Application." In fact, the first section was almost exactly the same essay that Stefansson had published in the *Mercury*. However, for the book to retain a nominally serious mien, the prior publication of this material in a satirical venue had to remain concealed.[95] The

[93] The following discussion is based on Janice Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 202-10.
[94] At least one review explicitly characterized the book as iconoclastic. See the unsigned review of *Standardization of Error,* by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *The Weekly People*, 5 May 1928.
[95] The second chapter was retitled "The Pleasures of Buncombe" in its subsequent publication as part of the book *Adventures in Error*. The decision to give this content a title that, with the inclusion of the word

first few pages set forth, in an informal, conversational tone, what Stefansson presents as an important problem of modern American civilization: the increasing fragmentation of knowledge into specialized disciplines and the blinding pace of its evolution. "[T]he accepted facts of a dozen years ago have become the error and folk-lore of to-day," Stefansson laments. "You standardize knowledge, and while you are at the job the knowledge changes."[96]

To mitigate the arduous, continual process of learning, unlearning, and relearning modern knowledge anew, Stefansson proposes a solution based on the mathematical sciences: all knowledge should be converted into knowledge-by-definition, comprised of facts-by-definition. Instead of basing these facts on "our clumsy system of observing and reporting," Stefansson argues that people should simply agree upon the attributes of objects, using a system that selects the best potential definition by adjudicating the utility of all possible attributes.[97] As an example, he compares the ostrich of zoology to the ostrich of literature, philosophy, and morals. Whereas the facts concerning the first ostrich are "indefinite," "faulty," and "contradictory," the second ostrich presents a perfect portrait of clarity in its agreed-upon, if mythical propensity to hide its head in the sand when threatened. What does it matter, Stefansson argues, that that bird does not exist? "As a text for moralists, as an epithet that politicians use for their opponents, as a figure of speech generally, what could serve as well?" Stefansson wonders. "Our literature is richer, our vocabulary more picturesque through this beneficent bird of hypothesis. He has many inherent advantages that no real bird could have."[98] On the basis of this and several other examples, Stefansson demonstrates that knowledge-by-definition has "the advantages of being easily grasped, picturesque, and of a higher average moral value than the so-called 'real' knowledge." By contrast, as he notes, empirical knowledge "cannot always be relied on to support the fashion of the time or even the moral system of the community."[99]

Having identified this egregious gap between defined and real knowledge, Stefansson is led, in the opening pages of the second section, to interrogate the value of truth itself:

> The most striking contradiction of our civilization is the fundamental reverence for truth which we profess and the thorough-going disregard for it which we practise. This is the veriest commonplace. ... God and Truth have from the earliest times been the two ideas that have commanded the greatest reverence.

"buncombe," would have denoted explicitly its connection to debunking, is another indication that the book's satirical intent had perhaps not been completely evident to its initial readers.

[96] Stefansson, *The Standardization of Error* (London: Kegan Paul and Trench, 1928), 8.

[97] Ibid., 14.

[98] Ibid., 17-19.

[99] Ibid., 22-23.

> ... [W]hile the philosophers have discussed at great length whether God is good, they have never discussed whether Truth is good. Is it not a bit suspicious that this is the one thing they have always assumed? And in a world of chaotic philosophies that get us nowhere, is it not high time to ask if there be any sound reason why Truth should be exempted from that fundamental scrutiny to which even the gods have had to submit?[100]

Buoyed by this revelation, Stefansson proposes to conduct a series of tests based on the Biblical maxim that "by their fruits shall ye know them."[101] By examining people's actions rather than their words, he suggests that one can determine whether people actually prefer truth or falsehood, and which option has been of greater benefit to mankind. He thereupon launches into what Sherrill Grace has described as "an ironic, witty castigation of cultural misrepresentations that serve the interests of established, civilized, political regimes and reinforce mainstream ideology."[102] Scrutinizing parenthood and marriage, the instruction of various subjects in schools, familiar cultural icons and occasions, the cultures of business and advertising, and the entertainment industry, Stefansson finds, in every case, that people prefer to believe and to communicate, if not outright deception, then various abridged and perverted forms of the truth.

Space does not permit a full examination of these themes and their roots in American culture of the 1920s; one example, in which Stefansson juxtaposes hygienic education with advertising, will have to suffice. Stepping away from the book for a moment, historians studying this period record a new concern among the American middle classes with personal hygiene, as provoked by their growing awareness of theories of disease transmission and as reflected in the increased availability and domestic installation of piped water and indoor plumbing. Commercial advertisers seized upon this trend. Drawing subtle and unsubtle connections between one's physical cleanliness and one's social status, advertisers promoted their products as necessary solutions to newly identified maladies such as "B.O.," or body odour, and "halitosis," or bad breath.[103] Against this cultural tableau, Stefansson mischievously notes that physiologists, "doubtless untruly," were now saying that "nearly all the supposed scientific arguments for bathing are fictions and fallacies."[104] After listing some facts in support of this contention, he neatly skewers in one motion middle-class morality, the tactics of advertisers, and their collusion in maintaining the status quo:

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[100] Ibid., 28-29.
[101] Ibid., 30.
[102] Grace, *Idea of North*, 269, fn5.
[103] Kyvig, *Promise and Pain*, 109-12, 164-67.
[104] Stefansson, *Standardization*, 62.

> The slogan was, in the generation of our parents: 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness.' But the investment in soap and in the allied industries has grown faster since then than the property of the churches, and the soaps advertise more. To-day the sales talk sways the nation, and it is doubtful if godliness even approaches cleanliness in popularity. We must fight as hard, therefore, to keep such physiology out of the schools, as no fundamentalist has yet fought to keep Darwinism out of the Universities. And we shall succeed, backed as we are by the advertising funds and the publicity genius of the whole soap industry from Bon Ami to Zap.[105]

The scenario becomes increasingly farcical as Stefansson evokes the internal divisions that might emerge between corporations based on their sales of contradictory solutions to hygienic dilemmas. Will the forces of perfume, or those of soap ultimately triumph? Or will the underwear manufacturers and laundries have things their way? It is rollicking, irreverent fun.

Based on such concrete examples, Stefansson argues that real facts are complicated and contradictory, and that simplification and standardization are required everywhere. Geographical facts, he shows, are too complicated to teach except in their barest outlines, so it is necessary to ignore many of them. "We would certainly have to lengthen out our school courses if we went into such hair-splitting," he says judiciously, "and our millions of potential workers would be kept out of the mills and factories even longer then [sic] they are now."[106] Moreover, since the teaching of such subjects as history and physiology are bound up inextricably with the building of personal character, the truth should be admitted, Stefansson believes, only insofar as it provides a model for morally upright behaviour.

Furthermore, as he illustrates, standardized falsehoods give people enormous pleasure, particularly those that touch upon the frozen Arctic. Schemes that induce children to believe in Santa Claus for longer produce an aggregate of "millions of happiness-years" shared out among the nation's children.[107] This made-up Arctic contains important moral content as well: it is the new Hell for those who have lost faith in the religious version. Stefansson considers that the grown-up equivalent of Santa Claus is the snowhouse-dwelling Eskimo, who thrills Americans through negative comparison rather than positive example:

> [T]he Arctic, peopled by Eskimos, is much more practical for our purposes than any inferno ever was when peopled by tormented spirits. No picture of spirits ever gets us like one of a wretched flesh-and-blood Eskimo who shivers from one year's end to the other. Away up there, crouched in his foul, unventilated house, drinking oil, he has a power to make us remarkably contented with poor lodgings, a careless landlord, and meals at Child's. In our little backyard, with its

[105] Ibid., 64-65.
[106] Ibid., 73.
[107] Ibid., 48.

> one wretched tree we think with a pleasant compassion of the stunted little Arctic Mongol who has never seen even a bush.[108]

The fictive Inuk—as presented in Robert Flaherty's documentary *Nanook of the North*, for example—possesses a high consolatory and moral function that the real men and women of the North are powerless to fulfill.

Stefansson's provisional conclusion is that 40% of truths are good and should be encouraged, 40% are bad and should be suppressed, and that 20% are fine in themselves, but complicated enough that they should be reserved for students of universities. He further analyzes this distribution of truth by disciplinary cross-section. Truth, he avers, is good in engineering, chemistry, physics, and the allied sciences; good in astronomy and geology whenever it does not conflict with religion; good about as often as bad in the social sciences; and usually bad in history, civics, and similar fields. He defends this judgment on popular grounds: "[W]e have the public with us, since we have come to a conclusion which justifies what they always have done, what they dearly love doing, and what they are at heart convinced is right...."[109] The book closes with Stefansson's dystopian, near-totalitarian vision of a future ruled by knowledge-by-definition, in which the institutional forces of morality and censorship—the Watch and Ward Society, the Society for the Suppression of Vice, the prohibitionists, the fundamentalists, and the anti-Darwinists—act as one "to take care that mere facts shall not lead us into foolishness."[110] The book closes on this solemn, pious note.

All 110 pages of this paean to truthiness, as it might be called today in the idiom of Stephen Colbert, is delivered in a perfectly earnest deadpan tone. Not once does the mask of satire slip. Impishly, Stefansson inserts several ironic anticlimaxes in which the knowing reader expects him to lower his façade of unreason. "Perhaps, Gentle Reader, you had arrived at the truth about Truth before you saw this treatise," Stefansson purrs at the beginning of his conclusion. "The fact is, our position is not really at all what it has seemed to be, for we keep another, and so far unhinted, solution in reserve."[111] But the expected catharsis does not come. What makes the coherence of the performance even more remarkable is Stefansson's smooth integration and reversal of several scenarios that he had previously debunked with all seriousness, such as a discussion about temperature in the Arctic.

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[108] Ibid., 93-94. Stefansson had been an early critic of the authenticity of Flaherty's film elsewhere, but here, in accordance with the book's general tone, excuses Flaherty his many manipulations of history and reality. See ibid., 86-94.
[109] Ibid., 102.
[110] Ibid., 110.
[111] Ibid., 94-95.

The book seems to have been received with resounding success. Anglo-American reviewers praised its witty and epigrammatic style and its searing indictment of social and educational hypocrisy.[112] Many were surprised but pleased to discover that an arctic explorer, as reviews inevitably characterized him, could display such a sense of humour. "The famous conqueror of Arctic regions ... shows himself to be the possessor of a devastating sardonic humor and a master of the satiric essay," wrote one reviewer in the *New York Times Book Review*.[113] "Mark Twain never did anything better," another affirmed.[114] Stefansson was newly characterized not only as a humorist, but as a philosopher. His presence at Harvard at the same time as William James, George Santayana, and Josiah Royce was thought to indicate the possible source of his interest in the subject.[115] The contemporary connection between philosophers such as James and educational reform may have partly underwritten the characterization of the book by some reviewers as an indictment of current educational practice.[116] Indeed, the persecuted Chicago superintendent of schools, William McAndrew, seized upon the book as an ally in his fight to defend his district's curriculum from charges of anti-Americanism and unpatriotic sentiments, made by Chicago's mayor, William Hale Thompson. Perhaps unsurprisingly in light of this contemporary political situation, a *Chicago Tribune* writer viewed the book as a direct attack upon authority.[117]

Although very few reviewers failed completely to perceive the book's humorous intent, one did raise concern over the book's subtlety of argument: "[S]tefansson makes a strong plea for honesty and fearlessness under the guise of a plea for the opposite. ... [H]e proceeds to defend this course, and so cleverly does he do it at times that it might almost defeat its real

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[112] For reviews, see File 21, Box 15, MSS 98, RSC; Hoi Bibliologoi, "A Review of Books That Boost," *Educational Review* 75 (1928): 156; A.E. Murphy, review of *Standardization* by Stefansson, *International Journal of Ethics* 38 (1928): 357-58; unsigned review of *Standardization* by Stefansson, *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 May 1928, 398; unsigned review of *Standardization* by Stefansson, *A.L.A. Booklist* 24 (1928): 344; Harold D. Meyer, Phillips Bradley, and LeRoy E. Bowman, review of *Standardization* by Stefansson, *Social Forces* 6 (1928): 508; "Editorial," *Psyche* 8, no. 4 (1928): 1; E.M. East, "The Obsolete Truth," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 17 March 1928, 679-80; "Books Received," *The Economist*, 21 April 1928, 827-28.

[113] Unsigned review of *Standardization* by Stefansson, *New York Times Book Review*, 8 January 1928, 18.

[114] Hoi Bibliologoi, "Books That Boost."

[115] Ibid.; East, "Obsolete Truth," 680; E.J. Beck, "When Fakes Grow Famous," *Detroit News*, 25 March 1928.

[116] Hoi Bibliologoi, "Books That Boost"; unsigned review of *Standardization* by Stefansson in *A.L.A. Booklist*, 344; undated advertisement, *New York Times Book Review*, File 21, Box 15, MSS 98, RSC. In this last document, Stefansson's American publisher, W.W. Norton, characterizes Stefansson as urging "new fundamentals in education."

[117] "Editorial," *Psyche* 8, no. 4 (1928): 1; Edwin Balmer, "Stefansson Joins Ranks of Authors Attacking Authority," *Chicago Tribune*, 10 December 1927.

purpose."[118] This is an important point in light of another body of reaction that is difficult to reconcile with that of most reviewers. Some of Stefansson's friends and acquaintances seem not to have been fully convinced that he had indeed written a book of humour, according to Evelyn Stefansson:

> His little book *The Standardization of Error* ... often puzzled its readers. We used it as a kind of Rorschach test with friends, gauging their range by their response to it. ... We could tell by the guarded responses of [some] others that they were uncertain about what their reaction was supposed to be, like nouveau 'art lovers' faced with an avant-garde painting, without a clue as to an appropriate response.[119]

The differing reaction of reviewers and friends may have simply arisen from Stefansson's tendency to socialize in a variety of different circles and environments; what was apparent in Greenwich Village may not always have been apparent a mere several dozen blocks south at the Explorers Club, for example.

This is an interesting note of failure in a bouquet of success, however. It arrests the attention and deserves further contemplation. Given Stefansson's manifest joy at the confusion of some of his readers and at those who had to classify the book, he may even have written it so as to deliberately produce bewilderment in a segment of his audience, as a further joke that only enlightened readers might understand. Indeed, a small group of his friends reportedly "found it irresistibly amusing, downright funny, and memorized passages, hunting up out-of-print copies to share with friends."[120] One reviewer even noted that the book presupposed "a group of favored individuals, the author among them, who can attain ... truth quite independently of 'standardized error.'"[121] Even given the high level of satirical fluency in American culture during this time, it was a genre associated most with highbrow audiences and publications. It seems safe to conclude that on some level, *The Standardization of Error*, along with his other satirical articles, was aimed at a more specific audience than were his arctic debunking campaigns, and may therefore have been misinterpreted by readers not of that audience.

Although this book was not explicitly about the Arctic, it interacts with Stefansson's exploratory identity in several interesting ways. It extends his critique of educators who taught

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[118] J.D.R., review of *Standardization* by Stefansson, *Canadian Forum*, n.d., File 21, Box 15, MSS 98, RSC. The review in *Social Forces* (cited above) gives no indication that the book is meant to be humorous. Another reviewer questioned whether or not Stefansson was "spoofing." Beck, "When Fakes Grow Famous."
[119] Stefansson Nef, "Visionary," x.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Murphy, review of *Standardization* by Stefansson, *International Journal of Ethics* 38 (1928): 358.

misinformation about the Arctic through ignorance, complacency, or dogmatism. Given that it was regarded partly as an instructive philosophical meditation on the subject of truth—indeed, it was classified directly under that heading by the American Library Association's *Booklist*—it is plausible to suggest that it gave Stefansson a new cachet as a general expert on truth. This new status reinforced his own appearance of truthfulness and shored up the authority of the claims made in his other books, including his arctic travelogues. "Mr. Stefansson is corporeal proof," wrote Ralph Thompson in the *New York Times*, "of the fact that not all explorers are inventors as well."[122] This subtle effect, if intentional, was not entirely honest, given that scholars and others have demonstrated that Stefansson was not always truthful in such accounts.

One can also read *The Standardization of Error* as Stefansson trying out his satirical persona in the view of a wider audience. While the *American Mercury* was a known platform for satire, a book published in a series entitled "New Science," as this book had been in the United States, was not. To what extent would the uninformed reader accept a satirical element within Stefansson's well-known exploratory identity? Here, the evidence presented by some of his friends seems relevant. If even those who knew Stefansson, a man who never hesitated to air his beliefs, were confused by his intent in *The Standardization of Error*, then it suggests that he had not been fully able to demonstrate even to some of his intimates that his exploring and satirical personas could comfortably coexist. The joke had failed, on some level: unperceived irony is irony forever stillborn.[123]

The Standardization of Error enjoyed a resurrection in 1936 as the first two chapters in a collection of Stefansson's humorous and satirical essays entitled *Adventures in Error*. Also included in this book were Stefansson's other two pieces from the *American Mercury* and an essay on Mencken's infamous bathtub hoax of 1917.[124] As before, some reviewers did not find Stefansson's sense of humour completely to their liking. "This book would have pleased me more if it had been less flippant and sarcastic," wrote George Sarton in *Isis*, "but we should be grateful to the author for having written it, even as it is, for no intelligent man will read it without being a little wiser for it."[125] Sarton's review may not have been based solely on a divergent personal sense of aesthetics, for the Depression had altered the terms of what

[122] Ralph Thompson, "Books of the Times," *New York Times*, 18 November 1936, 23.
[123] Test, *Satire*, 183.
[124] Mencken had written a mock-serious piece of journalism, entitled "A Neglected Anniversary," that gave a fictitious history of the bathtub's nineteenth-century arrival and acceptance in American life. However, it was widely believed and recirculated throughout the interwar era, even after Mencken's exposure of it as a hoax.
[125] George Sarton, review of *Adventures in Error* by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Isis* 29 (1938): 459. A similar reaction is evident in the unsigned review of *Standardization of Error* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 May 1928: "Small and short as the book is, it does not escape dullness; the point could have been made in half the space."

Americans found funny.[126] At the same time, it had also brought a close to Stefansson's debunking and satirical careers.

Erroneous adventures?

Adventures in Error was Stefansson's last major debunking publication; as such, it is an appropriate place to look for early evidence of his own evaluation of that career. Although a full analysis of this sequel to *The Standardization of Error* is beyond the scope of this chapter, one passage in particular presents Stefansson musing, with his characteristic blend of light and heavy tonalities, upon his many adventures in (the banishment of) error:

> I might confess here that to the extent that I am successful in [debunking] such as this, I feel as if I were stealing candy from a child when I make it increasingly difficult for the rest of the world to swallow the good old hokum about the Arctic. Fortunately, I have never been very successful. But it is equally fortunate that I am not very serious about Truth—fortunate at least for me. I am no Jeremiah declaiming against iniquity. I like to contrast my benevolence with the misanthropy of the satirists....[127]

There is some obvious disappointment in this characterization of his efforts, despite his attempt to resume the sacrilegious air with which he had treated truth ten years ago in *The Standardization of Error*. His distinction between his own attitude and that of satirists is also noteworthy. Does he foreground this distance as a tactic of misdirection, or as a quiet admission of defeat? If the latter, his failure cannot be ascribed to his individual efforts alone. The culture around him had changed its tone with the onset of the 1930s, and Stefansson was already in the process of shedding his overtly humorous skin to match the change in circumstances. His new association with Pan-American Airlines in 1932 caused a severe drop in his output of articles generally. Based on a perusal of his publications in the 1930s, his debunking career appears to

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[126] See Robert A. Gates, *American Literary Humor during the Great Depression* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), especially the introduction.

[127] Stefansson, *Adventures in Error*, 118-19. He expresses a similar kind of humorous defeat in his afterword to a new edition of *The Friendly Arctic* released in 1944: "[I]t can hardly be said that there has been a ... progress of general public knowledge and awareness of northern conditions. You can still produce astonishment or incredulity, according to the temperament of the listener, by saying to an audience that the US Weather Bureau has recorded 100 degrees in the shade within the Arctic, and that the Fourth of July is likely to be as hot five hundred miles up the Yukon, practically on the Arctic Circle, as it is five hundred miles up the Amazon, practically on the Equator. You can still get *oh*'s and *ah*'s by saying that wheat ripens within the Arctic, and that five or more of our states have colder wintertime records than Point Barrow at the north tip of Alaska. Those are still many who believe that people who live in the Arctic prefer summer to winter and that the summertime is there the chief season of activity; those are still few who know that most Arctic residents prefer winter to summer, and that the winter is the chief season of work and travel." *Friendly Arctic* (1944), 712.

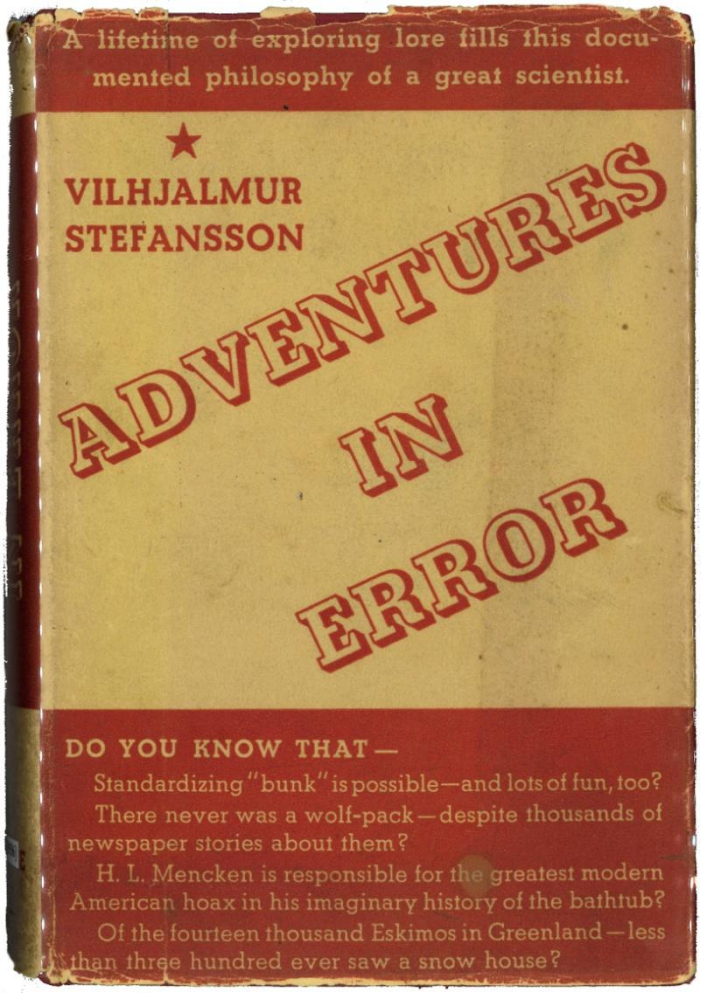

Figure 3.3. The dust jacket of *Adventures in Error* (1936) endows Stefansson with multiple expert identities, including that of debunker.

have wound up by the middle of that decade. *Adventures in Error* should therefore be considered the last, trailing tendrils of Stefansson's activities of the 1920s, particularly as it consisted mainly of essays first published or drafted in that decade.

American society of the 1930s looked less kindly upon the iconoclastic characters and tendencies of the 1920s. Their deflationary tendencies had been welcomed and enjoyed at a time of individual and social prosperity. The Depression, however, performed its own bitter brand of deflation upon people's livelihoods, prospects, and hopes for the future, and to pile insult upon injury was not a move best calculated to win the increasingly limited dollars that people had to spend upon entertainment. Both Mencken and Stefansson experienced pronounced dips in their respective popularity, perhaps rightly so in one sense, as both of them had been promulgating variations on the same messages since the end of the Great War, at

least.[128] With age came experience, and both had undergone enough experiences to realize, if they had not already known, that the eradication of favoured popular falsehoods would not happen in their lifetimes. As Mencken wrote, on learning that Stefansson proposed to retell the history of his bathtub hoax, "That fake will never die! It has actually got into the encyclopedias. I have exposed and denounced it on two separate occasions, but it continues to live and flourish." Wryly, he added, "The fact fills me with confidence that our holy Christian religion will never perish from this earth."[129]

While Mencken increasingly turned his attention to writing nostalgic remembrances of his earlier years, Stefansson became more and more preoccupied with his work for various branches of the American government and military, which would come to engulf his professional attention for the remainder of his career. He would continue to correct false conceptions of the Arctic in the course of this work, notably in the nearly six-hundred-page *Arctic Manual* (1940) written for the benefit of American troops and engineers working in the northern Canadian territories and Alaska, and in a booklet published by the Foreign Policy Association, *The Arctic in Fact and Fable* (1945). Yet these very different environments and audiences did not encourage the persistence of the dark humour that had marked his previous efforts.

This chapter has built on the established scholarly understanding of Stefansson's educational campaign to banish Arctic falsehoods both by demonstrating its alignment with the debunking tradition so popular in post-World War One America, and by drawing out a previously overlooked component of that campaign, the use of humour as a pedagogical tool. Facing an audience of southerners enamoured with the harsh representations of the Arctic regions promoted by historical and current explorers and travellers, Stefansson mobilized a range of rhetorical strategies to endear them to a warmer, friendlier, and, most importantly, a more apparently truthful vision of the region, based on his exploratory knowledge of what it held, and what it might hold. His humour enjoyed its most prominent role and reached a high state of sophistication in the few satirical productions he attempted, most particularly *The Standardization of Error*.

Yet Stefansson's sense of humour was no less complex than the rest of his personality. Employed in a mercurial fashion, it could mock as well as flatter, scorn as well as teach. Moreover, it seems to have confused and deterred some of his friends and readers while it

[128] Martin makes this assertion about Mencken's career in *Debunkers*, 33-34.
[129] Mencken to Stefansson, 16 June 1936, MSS 196, RSC.

delighted others. His satires may have been predicated upon the values and views that he expressed sincerely in other contexts, but they were never completely reconciled, nor were they entirely reconcilable to his exploratory personality. In the sense that his humorous efforts either contradicted or detracted attention from his most prominent messages, they cannot be considered entirely complementary to his educational program, although they both stemmed from Stefansson's desire to question received wisdom and authority in lively, even controversial fashion.

It is difficult to assess precisely why Stefansson's vision of the friendly Arctic was not more widely taken up by American and Canadian audiences. The power of received myths of the North and the continued attestations of some of Stefansson's colleagues about the Arctic's unfriendly nature likely played important roles. So, too, did the spectacular, widely publicized failures of Stefansson's attempts in the early 1920s to prove the friendliness of the Arctic by establishing a domestic muskox ranching industry on Baffin Island and by colonizing Wrangel Island, off the coast of Siberia. However, despite Stefansson's realization that his debunking had not been universally effective, it is this aspect of his work that is most frequently rated as his greatest contribution to society. Although he may not have been able to convince everyone all the time that the Arctic was friendly, he effected enough of a change in the North American culture, particularly amongst a youthful demographic in America, to enable them to see the Arctic as scientifically as the other oceans, and to seek out knowledge about it on that basis.

Indeed, while the quality of Stefansson's own scientific activities varied, he seems to have transmitted some of his love and his vast knowledge of the arctic regions to many students and scholars who came to consult him at the Stefansson Library, and later at Dartmouth College, after his permanent retirement to the United States in 1919. Those students who undertook professional or academic training and made their own contributions to the study of arctic regions may be understood in one sense as part of the legacy of Stefansson's lifelong educational campaign. These twin themes of personal relationships and knowledge production will be pursued throughout the second half of this dissertation. The next chapter will widen the inquiry into the promotion and dissemination of arctic knowledge by examining the efforts of Stefansson, George Douglas, and Richard Finnie to circulate information through intimate networks of correspondence during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

Chapter 4:
Exploratory Correspondences

Once worth sending and receiving, these well-crafted emanations
from good and copious minds will still repay careful, informed reading.
Alan T. McKenzie[1]

Salutation

As an old man, Richard Finnie recalled how a quest for one elusive book in the summer of 1931 had unfolded into two lifelong bonds. While on his honeymoon in Ontario with his bride, Alyce, Finnie noticed that Vilhjalmur Stefansson was giving a lecture in Smith's Falls, a town they were visiting. Their meeting after the lecture led to an impromptu decision to spend a few days together, visiting some of Finnie's and Stefansson's friends who had worked in the Arctic and lived in the province.[2] One such person was George Douglas, whom Stefansson had met several decades ago. "Stef liked to bring together people with similar interests," Finnie recollected, "and knew that George and I would have much to talk about." Nor would Alyce be overlooked. Stefansson knew that Douglas possessed a rare book written in Spanish about Laurent Ferrer Maldonado, a sixteenth-century explorer who claimed to have sailed through the Straits of Anian, more recently known as the Bering Strait—one point of entry to the Northwest Passage.[3] Since Alyce had recently completed an M.A. at the University of California at Berkeley in Romance languages, Stefansson suggested that she might like to translate the book into English, perhaps as the prelude to a doctoral dissertation on the subject of Maldonado.

The three of them—Alyce Finnie, Stefansson, and Richard Finnie—drove out to Northcote Farm, near Lakefield, where George lived with his wife Kay. Remembering that day, Finnie wrote, "In the welter of books, magazines and unopened newspapers in the house and barn at Northcote, George was unable to find the Maldonado book, and never did, but our meeting led to a warm and lasting friendship." The impromptu jaunt through Ontario in which

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[1] Alan T. McKenzie, introduction to *Sent as a Gift: Eight Correspondences from the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Alan T. McKenzie (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 16.
[2] One of their visits was to Diamond Jenness and his family at their summer cottage in Ramsey's Crossing, about fifteen miles north of Ottawa. Stuart Jenness, Diamond's son, documents the occasion in *Through Darkening Spectacles: Memoirs of Diamond Jenness* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2008), 337-38.
[3] Maldonado's voyage is today considered to be a spurious one. For a recent discussion of Maldonado, including an oblique comparison of his and Stefansson's worldviews, see Adriana Craciun, "The Scramble for the Arctic," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 11 (2009): 103-14.

that meeting was embedded sparked a similarly enduring friendship between Finnie and Stefansson. Significantly, in the letters and documents that recount this story, Finnie depicts these relationships in terms of the correspondence they produced. The "two fat binders" of the Douglas-Finnie correspondence were exceeded in volume only by Finnie's correspondence with Stefansson, which filled "five large binders."[4]

The preservation of most of these letters, and of many letters besides from the extensive personal correspondence networks of these three men, permits the advent of a new historiographical approach to northern Canadian exploration: the study of epistolary sociability amongst exploratory individuals, and its personal, social, and intellectual origins and consequences. The original encounter between Stefansson, Finnie, and Douglas exemplifies an imbrication of friendship and intellectual endeavour, twin struts upon which their correspondences were built and sustained throughout their lives. Their letters both illuminate and perform their continuous and entwined personal and scholarly investment in and production of the historical and current Canadian North, both in writing to each other as well as to other northern friends and acquaintances. Their personal epistolary networks also represent the continuation of a natural historical exploratory framework of knowledge production into the mid-twentieth century as an active alternative to scientific ways of knowing the North.

A theoretical framework for the investigation of their personal epistolary networks may be found in scholarly literature about the early modern Republic of Letters and scientific correspondence networks. Elements of this corpus will be selected to serve as a useful interpretative model for analyzing the epistolary construction, transmission, and reception of information about the Canadian North in the correspondence networks of Stefansson, Finnie, and Douglas. This analysis will suggest that these letters and the information they contained were as inflected by their social and material provenance as by the social and material mechanisms that framed and facilitated their transfer of knowledge. This chapter's focus will then narrow to consider, in detail, the correspondence exchanges of these three individuals. A summary of the archival collections will convey information about the circumstances of preservation, and some general issues of interpretation surrounding long-term personal correspondences will be raised. These epistolary relationships—between Finnie and Stefansson,

[4] The two main accounts of these meetings reside in Richard Finnie to Mrs. Gordon Mallory, 14 June 1978, File 7, Volume 7, Richard Sterling Finnie fonds, MG31 C6, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter cited as LAC) and Finnie, "My Friend Stefansson," unpublished MS (dated 1980), File 1, Volume 11, MG31 C6, LAC. See also Stefansson to Douglas and Stefansson to Finnie, 27 July 1931 and Stefansson to H.R. Wagner, 27 August 1931; both File 8, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

Stefansson and Douglas, and Douglas and Finnie—evince distinct permutations of the common and mutual seeking of friendship and northern information, as well as varying degrees of deployment of the possibilities inherent within the epistolary form. Close attention will be paid to each in turn. These discussions will foreground the especially personal and affective nature of these corresponding relationships and the information they produced, a nature made possible, even prominent, by the borders of the epistolary form.

Letters, correspondences, and networks

The letter, whether handwritten, typed, or electronically produced, is still and has always been one of the most common forms of textual endeavour. It has been termed one of the *Urforms* of literature; it has been cited as the origin of several genres, including the newspaper, the scientific article, and the epistolary novel.[5] Scholastically speaking, letters are of multidisciplinary interest. While historians have traditionally regarded them as one of many repositories to be mined for data about persons and events, literary scholars have tended to highlight the relationships perpetuated and described therein, taking the classical view of the letter as a *sermo amicorum absentium*, a conversation between absent friends. This artificial separation between the objective and subjective information contained in letters, between their "public" and "private" content, and between different disciplinary approaches, has been supplemented by an interdisciplinary view of letters and correspondences as complex, mutually negotiated processes with particular performative, textual and rhetorical qualities.[6] Letter-writing is now understood as a social practice, enmeshed both in the conventions and ethics of a particular corresponding relationship and in the wider values, beliefs, and practices of the culture or cultures in which it is undertaken.[7] This is as true of historical letters written toward scholarly or scientific ends as those composed to fulfill personal obligations—although letters cannot always be placed squarely in such categories.

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[5] Thomas O. Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction in Europe, 1500-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15; Terttu Nevalainen, introduction to *Letter Writing*, eds. Terttu Nevalainen and Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), 1. Jacques Derrida comments that "the letter, the epistle ... is not a genre but all genres, literature itself." Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 48.

[6] Liz Stanley, "The Epistolarium: On Theorizing Letters and Correspondences," *Auto/Biography* 12 (2004): 211. Citing these three qualities, William Decker adds the "artifacticity of the personally inscribed holograph" as another hallmark of this newer interpretative framework. Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 4.

[7] David Barton and Nigel Hall, introduction to *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, eds. David Barton and Nigel Hall (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), 1.

The study of epistolarity, or the theory and practice of letter-writing, intersects quite naturally with the study of networks of scholarly and scientific correspondence. Such epistolary communities constitute one variant of the growing scholarly interest in the microsociology of knowledge, the "everyday intellectual life of small groups, circles, networks or 'epistemological communities,' viewed as the fundamental units which construct knowledge and direct its diffusion through certain channels."[8] A classical topic of interest arising from European intellectual history has been the Enlightenment community of corresponding scholars known collectively as the Republic of Letters. Meanwhile, historians of science have long appreciated the value of the correspondence of great scientists, as demonstrated through the many collected and published volumes of such literature.[9] The seminal theoretical work of Bruno Latour on networks of science and technology has spurred a fresh wave of interest in the communal and textual production, circulation, and reception of scientific ideas.[10] Studies of networks of scientific correspondence, especially those concerned with natural history, complement and contribute to general scholarship about national and international histories of European and extra-European scientific endeavours.[11]

Although the individuals and communities described in these literatures are, in the main, temporally and geographically distant from twentieth-century Canada, the practices they describe are not dissimilar to those found within the northern correspondences soon to be examined. Without claiming any causal connections over improbably long spans of time, one can find congruence in basic forms and actions: exchanges and networks of voluntary

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[8] Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2000), 8.

[9] For a review of recent scholarly approaches to this genre, see Hubert Steinke, "Why, What and How? Editing Early Modern Scientific Letters in the 21st Century," *Gesnerus* 61 (2004): 282-95.

[10] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), especially chapter 6. David Philip Miller usefully deploys Latour in his analysis of the correspondence networks of Sir Joseph Banks, the renowned late-eighteenth-century naturalist, collector, and administrator. See Miller, "Joseph Banks, Empire, and 'Centers of Calculation' in Late Hanoverian London," in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, eds. David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21-37. John Gascoigne thoughtfully responds to Miller's paper, and, by extension, to Latour's work, in his article "The Ordering of Nature and the Ordering of Empire: A Commentary," in *Visions of Empire*, 107-13. See also Jim Endersby, "'From Having No Herbarium.' Local Knowledge versus Metropolitan Expertise: Joseph Hooker's Australasian Correspondence with William Colenso and Ronald Gunn," *Pacific Science* 55 (2001): 343-58.

[11] E.g. Anne Secord, "Corresponding Interests: Artisans and Gentlemen in Nineteenth-Century Natural History," *British Journal of the History of Science* 27 (1994): 383-408; Andrea Rusnock, "Correspondence Networks and the Royal Society, 1700-1750," *British Journal of the History of Science* 32 (1999): 155-69; Charles W.J. Withers, "Reporting, Mapping, Trusting: Making Geographical Knowledge in the Late Seventeenth Century," *Isis* 90 (1999): 497-521; Emma Spary, *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), chapter 2; Ellen Valle, "'The Pleasure of Receiving Your Favour': The Colonial Exchange in Eighteenth-Century Natural History," in Nevalainen and Tanskanen, *Letter Writing*, 131-53.

correspondence deployed certain social strategies to work in concert toward the achievement of knowledge, which correspondents pursued through a variety of activities, such as debate, research, criticism, and publication. The following selective review of the social and intellectual operations of older corresponding networks will provide an interpretative model for a similar discussion of the Stefansson-Finnie-Douglas correspondences as well as those individuals' personal epistolary networks.

The main conceptual arena for the exchange of scholarly correspondence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the Republic of Letters, a community of independent male scholars across Europe who corresponded in the pursuit of knowledge.[12] The primary goal of the Republic was to create an egalitarian space for dialogue in which opinions could be exchanged without the fear of bias arising from national, religious, historical, or other schismatic barriers such as influenced scholarship arising from older institutions—churches, universities, and scholarly academies.[13] The success of the Republic's main activity was predicated upon the free, willing circulation of information in epistolary form. Indeed, this virtual republic, which yielded to no borders and yet held no territory of its own, was made material solely through letters. Each "citizen" had to establish, maintain, and encourage the communication of information, primarily by personal contact leading to correspondence.[14] Through such connections, letters were sent making activities known, announcing new books, and spreading news about research in progress. Such missives were often forwarded, copied, recirculated, and even read aloud in order to reach the widest possible audience. This epistolary commerce—the exchange of information, books, and specimens—allowed the circulation of new and different representations and interpretations of the world, and thereby the creation of new knowledge

[12] The account given here of the Republic of Letters necessarily reduces a vast literature, one hopes not *ad absurdum*. For a brief historiographical perusal of writing on this topic, see Lawrence Brockliss, "Introduction: The Republic of Letters and Enlightenment," in *Calvet's Web: Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-19. In addition to those works cited, other influential contributions to this subject consulted include Maarten Ultee, "The Republic of Letters: Learned Correspondence, 1680-1720," *Seventeenth Century* 2 (1987): 95-112; Lorraine Daston, "The Ideal and Reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment," *Science in Context* 4 (1991): 367-86; Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

[13] Robert Mayhew, "Mapping Science's Imagined Community: Geography as a Republic of Letters, 1600-1800," *British Journal for the History of Science* 38 (2005): 74.

[14] Paul Dibon, "Communication in the Respublica Literaria of the 17th Century," *Res Publica Litterarum* 1 (1978): 52.

through cooperative intellectual endeavour.[15] Correspondences were joint endeavours in which meaning was the product of collaboration.[16]

There was an important social component to the production and transmission of information, inasmuch as certain behaviours and people facilitated its smooth passage. Reciprocity was a fundamental tenet of the Republic of Letters. The decision to correspond with someone constituted a formal engagement that necessitated frequent or continuous interaction, in order that both parties would derive equal benefit from the relationship.[17] Moreover, trust played an important role in scholarly engagements, as it provided a socially acceptable means to verify the accuracy and validity of information received through letters.[18] The need for verification arose from the epistemological move among Enlightenment scholars toward an empirical, proto-scientific knowledge that could only be gained through direct experience of phenomena. If one could not attain such experience oneself, one could accept trustworthy testimony as an adequate alternative upon which to base scholarly arguments.[19] As laid out in early modern moral philosophy, trust was best acquired through personal acquaintance, which allowed a direct assessment of one's character.[20] Yet here the realities of early modern time and space posed a barrier: travel was expensive and the distances prohibitively great. Although scholars would often make a journey throughout Europe in their early career in order to meet other scholars and thereby establish their personal network of correspondence, those who later became interested in the same intellectual problem could not always subsequently meet in person to establish mutual trust.

The solution developed, which both safeguarded the reliability of circulated information and allowed for the remote strengthening, continuation, and expansion of personal correspondence networks, was to render personal acquaintance and trust transmissible in

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[15] Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 96, 162.
[16] Mireille Bossis, "Methodological Journeys through Correspondences," trans. Karen McPherson, in "Men/Women of Letters," ed. Charles A. Porter, special issue, *Yale French Studies* 71 (1986): 68.
[17] Goodman, *Republic*, 139-40.
[18] This observation has gained most purchase among historians of science, but has also been taken up by scholars of epistolarity more generally. Carol Poster comments that letter writing emphasizes social distinctions and assumes that conviction is based primarily on relationships rather than argument. Poster, introduction to *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies*, eds. Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 2.
[19] The best-known and most theoretically complex iteration of this argument lies in Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
[20] Franz Mauelshagen, "Networks of Trust: Scholarly Correspondence and Scientific Exchange in Early Modern Europe," *The Medieval History Journal* 6 (2003): 9.

letters.[21] This was usually initiated through letters of introduction or recommendation in which the author stressed an individual's (personally experienced) credibility. Correspondents would introduce their friends to each other, vouching for them and thereby helping to extend their circles of correspondence. This scheme of epistolary socialization, as expounded by the historians of science David Lux and Harold Cook, is based in part on the sociologist Mark Granovetter's theory about the strength of weak ties. Granovetter maintains that new information, ideas, and rumours most often arise from one's acquaintances (weak ties) rather than one's inner circle of friends (strong ties).[22] In networks of scholarly correspondence, the ability to establish "weak" acquaintances through commonly-known intermediaries enabled the sharing of credible information more widely and more effectively.

A certain kind of individual, known as an "intelligencer," also expedited the circulation of information throughout epistolary networks. Characteristic of this role was the development of numerous correspondences in many countries, the devotion of considerable time to epistolary activities, including the recirculation of letters and information, and the bringing together of corresponding friends and acquaintances with similar research interests. In Granovetterian terms, networks of weak ties often focused around such individuals, who enjoyed a broad reach in gathering and disseminating information, and could therefore pass fragments of this commodity between different circles or networks.[23] In the Republic of Letters, figures such as Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), Samuel Hartlib (ca. 1600-1662), Ismaël Boulliau (1605-1694), and Henry Oldenburg (ca. 1619-1677) fulfilled this niche at one time or another.[24] What a contemporary said of Mersenne is broadly applicable to such men: "He had become the centre of the world of letters, owing to the contact he

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[21] Ibid., 2-3.

[22] David S. Lux and Harold J. Cook, "Closed Circles or Open Networks?: Communicating at a Distance during the Scientific Revolution," *History of Science* 36 (1998): 179-211. See also Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360-80; Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," in *Social Structure and Network Analysis*, eds. Peter V. Marsden and Nan Lin (Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1982), 105-30.

[23] Lux and Cook, "Closed Circles," 192.

[24] See Peter Dear, "Marin Mersenne," in *Encyclopedia of the Scientific Revolution from Copernicus to Newton*, ed. Wilbur Applebaum (New York and London: Garland, 2000), 431-32; Robert A. Hatch, "Peiresc as Correspondent: The Republic of Letters and the 'Geography of Ideas,'" in *Science Unbound: Geography, Space, Discipline*, ed. Brian P. Dolan (Umeå: Institutionen för Idéhistoria, Umeå Universitet, 1998), 19-43; Mark Greengrass, "Archive Refractions: Hartlib's Papers and the Workings of an Intelligencer," in *Archives of the Scientific Revolution: The Formation and Exchange of Ideas in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. Michael Hunter (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 35-47; Hatch, "Between Erudition and Science: The Archive and Correspondence Network of Ismaël Boulliau," in *Archives of the Scientific Revolution*, 49-71; Marie Boas Hall, "Oldenburg and the Art of Scientific Communication," *British Journal for the History of Science* 2 (1965): 277-90.

maintained with all, and all with him, ... serving a function in the Republic of Letters similar to that of the heart in the circulation of blood within the human body."[25]

A last point concerns the influence of particular spaces upon both the production and circulation of knowledge in letters. Although, as mentioned, the Republic of Letters had no bounding coordinates, various studies have investigated the relative positioning and concentration of correspondents and the epistolary ties that connected them across European space.[26] Along similar lines, the historical geographer Charles Withers encourages scholars to pay more attention to the spatial context of letter writing in scholarly correspondence networks. He asks: where were letters written, by whom to whom, and why? How did letters move, geographically and epistemologically, from private sites, into public space, and across space? How did they become credible documents, in content and epistolary convention, in specific contexts? [27] Speaking of the history of geographical knowledge production in Scotland, Withers argues that sites of meaning-making should be severed neither from the social networks nor the epistemic practices that sustained them and their audiences.[28] This statement serves as a neat coda to the above discussion. Keeping in mind the interlocking social, spatial, and intellectual dimensions of epistolary scholarly networks, the personal networks of Stefansson, Finnie, and Douglas shall now be examined, in order to lay bare in similar fashion their correspondents' own methods of circulating fact, news, opinion—and trust.

Corresponding North

Letters about the North were composed in particular ways and places. Stefansson, somewhere in his rabbit warren of apartments in New York's Greenwich Village, dictated a steady stream of words to one of his secretaries, developing his arguments as he voiced each consecutive thought. Hundreds of miles to the northwest, Douglas, after a hard day of manual labour on his sprawling farm north of Peterborough, Ontario would settle at a table in one of his property's many edifices to write, quite often with pencil or pen, long, musing letters filled with opinions

[25] Quoted in Dibon, "Communication," 50.
[26] See Mayhew, "Mapping," especially 74-76 and fn12-16, and Mayhew, "British Geography's Republic of Letters: Mapping an Imagined Community, 1600-1800," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65 (2004): 251-76. Diagrams of several of the main intelligencers' correspondence networks are compiled in Hatch, "Erudition."
[27] Charles W.J. Withers, "Writing in Geography's History: *Caledonia*, Networks of Correspondence and Geographical Knowledge in the Late Enlightenment," *Scottish Geographical Journal* 120 (2004): 41. From the perspective of literary criticism, James How urges similar attentiveness to what he terms "epistolary spaces." How, *Epistolary Spaces: English Letter-Writing from the Foundation of the Post Office to Richardson's* Clarissa (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).
[28] Charles W.J. Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 255.

about his farmland, the North, the world, and the people and texts such environments produced. Finnie's surroundings shifted midway through his life from his beloved acreage Bittersweet, located half an hour's drive west of Ottawa, to a modern apartment in Belvedere, California, where he rested, and caught up on his correspondence, in between stints of travelling the world for his corporate employer, Bechtel. For much of the twentieth century, one or more of these correspondents were engaged in such activities—but of what did they speak? Why did they write such letters, and how did they circulate? How did their letters fit within wider activities of knowledge production about the North? An overview of the motives and operations of these personal networks follows.

The subject matter of correspondents' letters fell into four categories: news about themselves and news or queries about mutual northern friends and acquaintances; historical, scientific, and geographical queries about the Canadian North; notices and comments about their own or others' writings about the North; and the exchange or gift of their own or others' articles and books about the North.[29] Letters were addressed not merely to each other, but to other individuals in their personal networks of northern friends and acquaintances, whom they had met during their time in the North or through mutual friends, either remotely or in person. Douglas and Stefansson, especially, were inveterate correspondents on northern topics, and it is upon their circles of correspondence that this discussion shall focus.[30] While the former wrote letters mainly for his private pleasure, the latter often used his network of contacts to obtain information for one of his publications—to wit, toward public education and some personal profit. Both men could aptly be termed modern-day intelligencers, as each had a large personal correspondence network of past and present northerners of diverse occupational composition and proportion. Douglas communicated with more retired Mounted Policemen, Hudson's Bay Company traders, Canadian government scientists and administrators, and trappers than did Stefansson. Meanwhile, Stefansson maintained connections with more American and Canadian politicians, industrial magnates, professional explorers, and military officers than did Douglas. Knowing and employing the strengths of each other's networks as well as their own, together

[29] Similar categories of information are also present in epistolary networks neither scholarly nor Euro-American in nature. See, e.g., Vukile Khumalo, "Ekukhanyeni Letter-Writers: A Historical Inquiry into Epistolary Network(s) and Political Imagination in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 113-42.

[30] During the 1930s and 1940s, Finnie lived within close proximity to many of his northern friends and acquaintances in Ottawa. Writing letters to them seems to have been unnecessary when visits were so easily accomplished. Finnie developed various northern correspondences late in life, after the deaths of Douglas and Stefansson, and therefore outside the time frame with which this chapter is concerned.

they had access to a staggeringly broad array of opinion and knowledge about the Canadian North.

Within these networks, a letter was hardly ever just sent, read, and forgotten. At the very least, news of its arrival, and the renewed contact with another that this event represented, was frequently reported in other correspondence. Some of its contents might also be paraphrased or quoted in letters destined elsewhere. Particularly under Stefansson's watchful eye, a letter from Douglas, Finnie, or another (temporarily or permanently) valued correspondent was often deemed important enough to reproduce and send to others, in order to check some information recorded therein, to solicit an opinion on the material, or even to jog memories—the writer's or reader's—and thereby retrieve further elusive pieces of information. About one northern contemporary of theirs, Harry Radford, Stefansson wrote to Douglas, "Partly to encourage you in going ahead farther with the Radford investigation I now do my best to extract from a faded memory what little I remember about this strange character."[31] The wide circulation and recirculation of letters in part or whole was a key strategy that Stefansson employed to gather information, as his wife noted:

> He would often have half a dozen carbon copies of a letter made and send them to as many people, involving the maximum number possible in an information quest, trying to create subsidiary search fires from the sparks he was sending out. If information eluded him, he remembered that it was missing and started up the search again the moment he met or heard of someone who might know the answer. It was this tenacity, combined with a concern for getting at the truth of any matter, plus his memory, which could sort and put together information from the unlikeliest sources, that was responsible for his success as a scholar.[32]

Once aware of Stefansson's investment in a particular query, Douglas and Finnie would send him summaries or carbon copies of any of their subsequent correspondence that touched upon that topic. However, since they regarded their own correspondence more as a source of pleasure than interrogation, they appear to have sent fewer carbon copies to each other purely of their own accord.[33]

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[31] Stefansson to Douglas, 17 June 1949, File 37, Volume 1, George Mellis Douglas fonds, MG30 B95, LAC and Box 30, The Encyclopedia Arctica Manuscript, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (hereafter cited as RSC).

[32] Evelyn Stefansson, "Postlude," in *Discovery: The Autobiography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson* by Vilhjalmur Stefansson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 397.

[33] Given the differing extent to which carbon copies are preserved in specific correspondences within these personal archives, this statement is more suggestive than assertive. However, it is interesting to note that the totals of preserved carbon copies present within the Stefansson-Finnie correspondence (349) and that of Stefansson and Douglas (140) are much greater than within the Douglas-Finnie correspondence (20).

The material economy of exchange, particularly of carbon copies, is worth a brief discussion. It was comparatively more effort for Douglas to find some time to handwrite a letter and travel, under his own power, several miles to the nearest post office to send and receive correspondence, than it was for Stefansson, who had his mail delivered to his door by the postman and his letters typed using professional office equipment and posted by his staff.[34] This unequal relationship applied also to the making of carbon copies, which Douglas and Stefansson both used regularly in their general correspondence. During periods of intensive research when Stefansson was requesting many carbon copies from Douglas, both of Douglas's own letters and those of his correspondents, he was clearly aware of these asymmetric conditions of production. He sought to rectify the imbalance by offering to make copies of Douglas's letters and photos using his own human resources and equipment.[35] While Douglas sometimes made copies of letters to send out, he also resorted to the tactic of lending original letters to his friends, asking them to make copies for themselves and return them.

Letters circulated in many ways through Stefansson's and Douglas's networks. Their paths are made evident either by direct textual reference or by noting the names written after the little "cc," typed or inked legibly on a discreet corner of the page. Precirculation was rare, but it did occur: once, Douglas sent a copy of a letter he had written to George Whalley, an English professor at Queen's University, first to Clifford Wilson, the editor of the Hudson's Bay Company magazine *The Beaver*, instead of to Guy Blanchet, for whom the copy had been made. Douglas asks Wilson to forward the letter to Blanchet after reading it and copying it for his own files if he wishes.[36] The recirculation of letters was much more common, and was usually intended, implicitly or explicitly, to provoke comment of some kind from its newly designated readers. Discrete copies of such letters could be made and sent, a copy going to each new correspondent, or one copy could be passed through a sometimes gloriously long daisy chain of hands. Finnie made a copy of a letter he had received from Fred MacLennan, one of his correspondents, and gave it to Douglas, who passed it to his friend Denny LaNauze, a retired policeman. LaNauze forwarded it to Lion, Douglas's brother, who finally returned the well-

[34] Douglas's access to postal services was eased by 1949, when his home was placed on a rural route, thereby enabling the delivery of mail to his property. Douglas to Finnie, 10 March 1949, File 4, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[35] Stefansson to Douglas, 17 June 1949, File 37, Volume 1, George Mellis Douglas fonds, MG30 B95, LAC and Box 30, MSS 96, RSC; Stefansson to Douglas, 1 September 1949, Box 30, MSS 96, RSC.

[36] Douglas to Clifford Wilson, 19 March 1956 and Wilson to Guy Blanchet, 23 March 1956; both File 1, Box 1, Guy Houghton Blanchet fonds, MS 0498, British Columbia Archives (hereafter cited as BCA).

travelled piece of paper to Douglas.[37] On occasion, letters were remembered and recirculated decades after their penning. When the subject of Douglas's and Stefansson's deceased friend John Hornby arose once more in 1945, Guy Blanchet sent Douglas copies of two letters that Stefansson had written about Hornby at the time of his disappearance in 1928 to Blanchet and to O.S. Finnie, Finnie's father. Douglas retyped these copies and sent them to Finnie, noting that "Stef of course has the originals in his files."[38] Long quiescent, archived in folders or boxes in offices on either side of the continent, such missives could be revivified with a breath of fresh interest in a topic and sent on their way anew.[39]

In these active networks of exchange, conventional forms of address were manipulated in response to spatial and social considerations. At the foot of carbon copies, Stefansson, Douglas, and Finnie would write short, cheery notes to other correspondents, subverting the new recipient's expectation of finding his name at the head of the page. Letters were addressed to one person, but carbon copied to the person for whom they were actually, if obliquely, intended.[40] At other times, letters ostensibly meant for one person were really written for general use. Stefansson noted in the opening of one such epistle to Douglas: "This is addressed to you in the form of a letter; but it is also a memo for wider use, which accounts for my putting in certain things I might omit if I were just writing you one more of what are by now many letters."[41]

Though the above descriptions may give the impression of an epistolary free-for-all, the circulation of letters occurred primarily within personal networks. A query initiated by Stefansson and pursued by Douglas through recourse to his own correspondents would usually conclude with responses returning by the way they had come: Douglas would write Stefansson directly, either quoting from or copying replies he had received in response to his iteration of Stefansson's question. Trust begat trust: because Douglas and Stefansson were old friends and informal colleagues, any parties included remotely in their exchanges would have their testimonies and opinions treated with the same respect as they would accord each other.

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[37] Douglas to Finnie, 11 July 1947, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[38] Douglas to Finnie, 11 October 1945, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6 and File 17, Volume 2, MG30 B95; both LAC.
[39] Such instances recall Thomas Beebee's definition of a letter as a text separated from its author that enters various posting and relays that will inevitably and unpredictably influence its interpretation and evaluation. Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction*, 15.
[40] "The enclosed copy addressed to Dick [Finnie] but Meant for Dr. [C.H.D.] Clarke ...." Douglas to Whalley, 24 May 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, George Whalley fonds, Queen's University Archives (hereafter cited as QUA).
[41] Stefansson to Douglas, 22 September 1955, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Correspondence, 1895-1962, MSS 196, RSC.

Sometimes, Douglas or Stefansson would deem it advisable to introduce one of their correspondents directly into the conversation, usually for the purpose of applying their personal expertise directly to a discussion. To enable the most judicious use of the newcomer's knowledge, acquaintances would be captioned in their letter of introduction. Of the schoolmaster Prentice Downes, Douglas wrote to Stefansson: "He has travelled much in the far North and is learned in its history."[42]

Stefansson, in particular, was fond of introducing people with expertise in common and then "eavesdropping" on their textual dialogues through the expedient of asking for carbon copies. He considered that the primary beneficiary of such joinings was Knowledge itself: "When I can set boating and transportation specialists like you two writing each other about Indian canoes, white-man adoption and adaptation of them, and whatever thereto pertains, and when both of you send us carbons, there grows apace a collection of knowledge and wisdom that might perish otherwise."[43] The same could be said of many of these lively correspondences. Whether written for private pleasure or profit or with the eventual intention of public education, they contain an astonishing quantity of facts and opinions on many aspects of the historical and present-day North. Their richness is enhanced by their multivocal accretion of information obtained as a result of their extensive circulation. Yet it must be noted that in their composition, they were not always complementary or complimentary to other modes of northern knowledge production in the mid-twentieth century.

The information that passed through the personal correspondence networks of Douglas, Stefansson, and Finnie can be characterized broadly as fitting within what might be called an exploratory or natural historical tradition of inquiry about the North. It privileged first-hand experiential observations and second-hand testimonials from trusted persons, qualitative and descriptive methods of natural and historical inquiry and analysis, and private, non-institutional methods of self-education and research. In these qualities, it contrasted with another model of knowing that was becoming more prevalent among a new generation of scientific researchers in the growing multidisciplinary endeavour of northern studies. These men, trained to postgraduate level in specific academic disciplines, were increasingly concerned with attaining

[42] Douglas to Stefansson, 3 February 1951, MSS 196, RSC.
[43] Stefansson to Douglas, 16 November 1958, MSS 196, RSC. Stefansson is referring to his acquaintance Kenneth Durant, to whom he had introduced Douglas by sending a carbon copy of one of Durant's letters, appropriately captioned.

knowledge of the northern environment through methods that foregrounded experimental rigour, quantitative analysis, and the complex synthesis of many different kinds of data.[44]

The kinds of spaces in which these different scientific and exploratory practices of northern knowledge were produced also varied, although they had that of the field in common. As scholars have recently demonstrated, twentieth-century northern scientific knowledge was associated with and made in such spaces as the university, the laboratory, the airplane, and later, the field research station.[45] The spaces of northern exploratory knowledge, as revealed through these kinds of personal correspondence networks, tended, on the contrary, to be domestic ones: the kitchen, the study, the library, the farm. Finally, different senses of temporality attended these scientific and exploratory discourses. While the former looked toward a future in which the Arctic would be understood and managed on scientific and rational grounds, the latter drew most upon their memories of past phenomenological experience in the northern environment, as well as the knowledge embedded in the published and unpublished texts of those who had been their predecessors in that environment, and who had predeceased them.

The domestic spaces of exploratory knowledge could double as spaces of political commentary. Private correspondence between Douglas and Finnie served as a safe haven in which they could express their dissent regarding government-sponsored agents and projects of knowledge production throughout the 1940s. These friends wrote with some cynicism about the characters and motives of people who had gained positions of power in private institutions like the Arctic Institute of North America, and in government committees such as the Defence Research Board, which promoted arctic research in the interests of national defence.[46] Douglas

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[44] See, e.g., Trevor Barnes and Matthew Farish, "Between Regions: Science, Militarism, and American Geography from World War to Cold War," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96 (2006): 807-26; Farish, "Frontier Engineering: From the Globe to the Body in the Cold War Arctic," *Canadian Geographer* 50 (2006): 177-96; P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Matthew Farish, "The Cold War on Canadian Soil: Militarizing a Northern Environment," *Environmental History* 12 (2007): 920-50; Stephen Bocking, "A Disciplined Geography: Aviation, Science, and the Cold War in Northern Canada, 1945-1960," *Technology and Culture* 50 (2009): 265-90. Richard Powell's work studies similar notions of the conduct of geographical fieldwork in a slightly later period. See Powell, "'The Rigours of an Arctic Experiment': The Precarious Authority of Field Practices in the Canadian High Arctic, 1958-1970," *Environment and Planning A* 39 (2007): 1794-1811; Powell, "Science, Sovereignty and Nation: Canada and the Legacy of the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58," *Journal of Historical Geography* 34 (2008): 618-38; Powell, "Becoming a Geographical Scientist: Oral Histories of Arctic Fieldwork," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 33 (2008): 548-65.

[45] See the work cited in the previous footnote.

[46] Douglas to Finnie, 28 March 1947, 18 April 1947, and 11 July 1947, all File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Douglas to Finnie, 4 January 1950, 20 February 1950, 31 January 1951, and 17 February 1951, all File 4, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Douglas to Finnie, 2 June 1952, File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Douglas, 14 April 1947, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Douglas, 15 January 1950 and 11 February 1951, File 4, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

and Finnie also questioned the utility of specific initiatives such as Exercise Muskox, a five-thousand-kilometre, three-month trek on snowmobiles over the central Arctic barrens in 1946 that seemed to create little new knowledge, either of the terrain or of mechanical means of traversing it.[47] From their liminal perspective upon new scientific and governmental discourses of northern knowledge production, Douglas and Finnie were able to critique these forms of power and knowledge within the private, trustworthy spaces of their correspondence.

Indeed, these letters written by Douglas, Stefansson, and Finnie were founded upon firm personal relationships, which prompted and permitted the exchange of useful and meaningful information. The affective dimension of these epistolary relationships can most readily be glimpsed in particular phrases and places, such as the glad greetings and fond farewells residing at the top and bottom of pages. Yet personal relations permeate the epistolary form, which has always been a vehicle for sustaining relationships and confirming identities as much as conveying information.[48] Moreover, the relationship between correspondents determines the ways in which content is presented (or omitted) and the motives for doing so. Information in letters can be no more blithely separated from its context than in any other historical document. If anything, one must be more careful when seeking to gain insight from letters, because they have traditionally projected an aura of intimacy and open-heartedness that is easy to mistake for truthfulness.[49] All long-term exchanges precipitate the textual construction and maintenance of a distinctive world with specific internal defining features, in which each correspondent assumes certain relational roles in recurring "plots" and "narratives" endemic to the correspondence.[50] The private and semi-private correspondences between Finnie, Stefansson, and Douglas all evince unique attitudes toward the conveyance of northern information shaped by the relationship between the two particular correspondents.

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[47] Douglas to Finnie, 8 February 1946, 19 February 1946, 1 March 1946, 7 March 1946, 21 March 1946, and 2 April 1946, all File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Douglas, 22 February 1946, 21 April 1946, and 26 July 1946, all File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[48] David A. Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), 91. On the elucidation of friendship networks through correspondence, see Nicola Thomas, "Exploring the Boundaries of Biography: The Family and Friendship Networks of Lady Curzon, Vicereine of India 1898-1905," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004): 496-519.

[49] Amanda Gilroy and W.M. Verhoeven write that "the most historically powerful fiction of the letter has been that which figures it as the trope of authenticity and intimacy, which elides questions of linguistic, historical, and political mediation ...." Introduction to *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, eds. Amanda Gilroy and W.M. Verhoeven (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 1. Nicky Hallett meditates at length on duplicity in epistolary form and relationships in "'Anxiously Yours': The Epistolary Self and the Culture of Concern," *Journal of European Studies* 32 (2002): 107-18.

[50] Stanley, "Epistolarium," 214.

While the discussion of personal networks above highlighted some of the political, social, intellectual, and material relations of the making of northern knowledge, the examination of three specific correspondences in depth will reveal something of northern exploration's private worlds.[51] Correspondences were sympathetic spaces in which the opinions and facts exchanged could be unapologetically entangled in personal circumstances, expressed without fear of censure or reprisal, or attempted for the first time before their refinement and repackaging for public audiences. Just as importantly, the epistolary form provided the ability to consistently maintain and preserve the relationships on which this knowledge was based. The following vignette, which serves as an introduction to a detailed consideration of the Finnie-Stefansson-Douglas correspondences, demonstrates the fine and nimble currents of personal, social, and intellectual relations that had to be navigated even in conversations ostensibly on the topic of geographical fact.

The Stefansson-Finnie-Douglas correspondences: an amuse-bouche

"I am all confused about the headwaters of the Dease," Stefansson wrote urgently to Finnie in late January 1942. The Guide Book to Arctic Canada that his staff was preparing for the U.S. War Department had to be completed by 6 February, and Finnie was acting as their satellite Canadian researcher, factchecker, and copyeditor. Outlining the precise reasons for his confusion, Stefansson continues: "Can you clarify this muddle from your own knowledge? Can you find a new map which clarifies it? Can you think of anybody who can tell you? Please follow this up as best you can and as quickly as possible."[52] Later that day, he dashed off another, related query as to whether the body of water known as Dismal was properly a lake or lakes. Finnie knew these questions would be of interest to Douglas, who had first-hand knowledge of the Dismal Lakes from his expedition to the Coppermine region in 1911-12. Quoting Stefansson's letters in a letter to Douglas, he asks that Douglas send any comments to him first. "Then I will forward them to Stefansson," he wrote, "after having had the pleasure and profit of reading them myself."[53]

Douglas's reply consists of two letters. One is a typed, three-and-a-half-page response addressed to Finnie but dealing with the questions Stefansson raised. Two copies of this letter were thoughtfully enclosed so that Finnie could send one to Stefansson and keep one for

[51] Cf. Withers, "Writing in Geography's History," 41-42.
[52] Stefansson to Finnie, 21 January 1942, MSS 196, RSC and File 9, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[53] Finnie to Douglas, 24 January 1942, File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

himself.[54] Though its text carefully delineates the geographical nature of the river and lakes, with reference to specific Topographic Survey of Canada maps and other published books, the presentation of fact is shot through with references to personal knowledge. With regard to the length of the chain of Dismal Lakes, Douglas notes drily, "[The explorer David] Hanbury called these 30 miles in all, with his customary perverted underestimation of distance. Knowing my tendency to be the reverse I called these 36 miles, privately thinking they must have been more." He was pleased to note that the most recent map confirmed his opinion of the distance as 39½ miles. Throughout the letter, Douglas also subtly foregrounds his authority in this matter by referring to the names he had given various topographical features in that area when he travelled there, and by enclosing several photographs he had taken of the Dismal Lakes during his expedition.

At the same time, Douglas casts aspersions on the comprehensiveness of Stefansson's geographical and historical knowledge of the area, even though Stefansson had travelled there only months before Douglas in the winter of 1911-12.[55] Douglas writes with asperity, "Stefansson does not seem to be familiar with the journey made by Mackintosh Bell and Charles Camsell in 1901. This was indeed one of the most notable journeys of travel and exploration in the annals of the North." Moreover, while praising this expedition, Douglas is able to deliver a sharp rebuke to Stefansson's well-publicized "friendly Arctic" method of exploration: "Truly a remarkable feat of canoe travel .... They lived almost entirely off the country, as parties did, as a matter of course in those days, without publicity." Indeed, in Douglas's handwritten cover letter, which seems to have been meant only for Finnie, he displays two dismissive reactions to Stefansson's query.[56] He imbues the above critiques of Stefansson's knowledge with a personal dimension: "Tell Stef to read "Lands Forlorn!" [Douglas's book] which has a careful description of the Dismal Lakes." He also considers that Stefansson's queries are "really quite insignificant matters."

Finnie's reply first thanks Douglas for his intellectual and, just as importantly, material assistance: "You came through nobly in response to my request for dope on the Dismal Lakes and Dease River. It was good of you to make a copy of your letter; it did save time when time

[54] Douglas to Finnie, 28 January 1942, MSS 196, RSC and File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[55] Douglas calls attention to specific places where Stefansson had made camp and forded waters. He may have done so to foreground Stefansson's presence there, thereby chastising his inattention to details of that environment. These comments may also serve as a rebuke to Stefansson's failed reciprocity of memory: Douglas remembers Stefansson's precise movements in that area, but Stefansson seems even to have forgotten Douglas's presence in that region, as evidenced by his lack of reference to *Lands Forlorn*, Douglas's account of his expedition there.
[56] Douglas to Finnie, 27 January 1942, File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

was at a premium, and I sent it to Stefansson."[57] In reply to Douglas's criticisms of Stefansson's pursuit and knowledge, he mounts a skilful mediation between his friends. While confirming his agreement with Douglas on certain points, he also defends Stefansson's behaviour, and thereby his authority of knowledge, by explaining Stefansson's situation more fully. On the validity of the queries, Finnie is in concord with Douglas over the relative unimportance of whether Dismal is a lake or lakes. He concurs that Stefansson is indeed "inclined sometimes to crack nuts with a steam hammer." However, Finnie casts this trait in a positive light, as extreme conscientiousness and a continual striving for accuracy. He also leavens Douglas's critique of Stefansson's knowledge by presenting it as a problem of too much, not too little information: "Stefansson is familiar with Bell's and Camsell's trip in 1900, all right, and he has probably read Lands Forlorn, but his library and his filing system are so enormous that he loses track of many things." With humour, Finnie then notes that this problem extends even to Stefansson's own publications: "On more than one occasion he has asked me for certain information contained in his own books, and I have gleefully referred him to page so-and-so in The Friendly Arctic or My Life with the Eskimos." Regarding Stefansson's lapse of memory about Douglas's published information on Dismal Lakes, Finnie makes a final confession, perhaps intending to lessen the blame by spreading it more evenly:

> As a matter of fact, I'm not guiltless so far as the Dismal Lakes are concerned. I should have remembered your description in Lands Forlorn, but I'm afraid I was getting a bit groggy. Alyce read it not so very long ago (with great enjoyment) and she contends now that when I spoke of Dismal Lakes in connection with the report, she said to me, 'You'll find a description in Lands Forlorn,' but apparently I wasn't listening. I am going to reread Lands Forlorn one of these days for the pleasure it will give me.

It was acceptable to forget the content of one's own books, but not those of one's friends: the last sentence serves as an implicit apology. Stefansson recognized his fault too, and made amends in an indirect manner. In the letter that his wife, Evelyn, wrote, thanking Douglas for his assistance and thereby closing the matter, she notes that "I have started to read your book in order to be well posted on your doings when we meet."[58] The confirmation of a matter of fact in these correspondences was hardly ever just that, as shall be demonstrated many times over in the coming scrutiny of these epistolary relationships.

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[57] Finnie to Douglas, 4 February 1942, File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. Finnie often refers to information as "dope," a habit presumably left over from his career as a journalist.
[58] Evelyn Stefansson to Douglas, 26 February 1942, MSS 196, RSC.

The Stefansson-Finnie-Douglas correspondences

The letters written by Douglas, Stefansson, and Finnie to each other are contained primarily in three personal fonds at two different archives: Library and Archives Canada (Douglas and Finnie) and the Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College (Stefansson). Together, there exist more than 1100 distinct letters written over a period of 40 years. When associated letters are included—carbon copies of letters from outside the correspondences but preserved within their bounds, letters written by the men's wives as proxy correspondents, and letters now lost that can be reasonably supposed to have once existed from textual evidence—the sum rises to more than 1800 letters.

The conditions under which they were archived, and their consequent preservation, vary. All of Stefansson's papers, including his colossal incoming and outgoing correspondence, were bequeathed to Dartmouth College. In the 1970s, his correspondence was indexed by the year of writing and by the first letter of the author's surname, a system which survives today.[59] Since Stefansson was assiduous about keeping all of the letters he received and making carbon copies of many of those he composed, his textual dialogues with Douglas and Finnie preserve the voices of both correspondents quite well. This dual vocality is replicated neither in Finnie's nor Douglas's archives.

As part of his preparation for writing an autobiography, Finnie sorted and set apart his correspondence with Douglas and Stefansson, which his second wife, Anne, eventually donated to what was then known as the Public Archives of Canada. His copy of the Stefansson-Finnie correspondence is tabulated in detail, with table of contents at the beginning of each volume listing the date and subjects of each letter. Though the Finnie collection contains many letters from correspondents, Finnie did not always make carbon copies of his own missives. While Stefansson saved most of Finnie's letters, Douglas saved very few. Out of the 188 letters that Finnie can be supposed to have sent to Douglas, only 89 survive, with the result that their extant textual conversation is dominated by Douglas. After Douglas's death, his widow sorted through his papers; beginning in 1976, she donated batches of these papers, including correspondence, to Canada's national archives. By contrast to Finnie's correspondence, comparatively more copies of Douglas's own letters to Stefansson and Finnie survive than do letters he received from them.

[59] Erika S. Parmi (Librarian, Stefansson Collection) to Finnie, 20 May 1976, File 5, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

The vagaries of preservation account, finally, for the reduction of this dissertation's quartet to a trio in this chapter: Guy Blanchet's correspondences are not considered.[60] In part, this omission arises from the nature of his relationships with the three individuals herein featured. Blanchet and Stefansson had only the slightest acquaintance, and wrote few letters, 10 of which are extant. By contrast, Blanchet and Finnie were good friends, but ones who did much of their socializing in person rather than by letter. Douglas and Blanchet, however, were not only close friends, but also had an epistolary relationship that the latter dated from 1910.[61] If this date is accurate, their correspondence would have spanned half a century, longer than any considered herein. Douglas, by his own account, saved Blanchet's letters: moreover, of their 41 surviving letters (dated between 1945 and 1960) most exist in, or were copied from, Douglas's fonds.[62] The disappearance of the rest of their letters from that repository is explained by a notation in Richard Finnie's journal from 5 April 1975, a day on which he had visited George's widow, Kay: "She burned Blanchet's letters because she disliked him."[63]

Connected to the preservation of these correspondences are three issues of interpretation: intertextuality, contextualization, and ethical use. The letters between Stefansson, Finnie, and Douglas exhibit a high degree of intertextuality: that is, letters between two of them are often either copied or mentioned to the third person, who would then reply to one or both of them, thus inserting themselves into a correspondence not technically their own.[64] These three-way exchanges both weaken the boundaries between the distinct epistolary relationships considered here and reflect their emplotment in the complex system of information exchange and circulation discussed above. Less a characteristic of these correspondences than of such textual relationships in general is the problem of contextualization. Liz Stanley terms letters "highly elliptical," in that the content of a textual exchange is predicated on the existence of "a social world known in common that is not delineated in detail and largely taken for granted." While references to public events can often be placed in historical context, those concerning personal relationships and private experiences

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[60] It should be noted that Blanchet's preserved letters to Douglas, Stefansson and Finnie contain many of the same general subjects as do the letters under consideration in this chapter.
[61] Blanchet to George Walton, 1 July 1960, File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA.
[62] Douglas to Clifford Wilson, 1 October 1957, File 37, Volume 1, MG30 B95, LAC.
[63] Finnie, unpublished journal entry, 5 April 1975, File 25, Volume 18, MG31 C6, LAC. There is no obvious explanation for why more of the Douglas-Blanchet correspondence does not survive in the Blanchet fonds.
[64] Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen identifies references to letters written by a third party as one of the seven different categories of intertextuality in letters. She defines intertextuality more broadly as "the relationship between a text and other texts." Tanskanen, "Intertextual Networks in the Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston," in Nevalainen and Tanskanen, *Letter Writing*, 76-77.

are trickier to parse in terms of their import and significance to the correspondents' lives.[65] In the correspondences here under consideration, contextualization is aided partly by Finnie's comparative youth. He lived over twenty years longer than Douglas and Stefansson, and in later life he wrote a fair number of letters that provide information about his personal and intellectual relationships with these men.

A final concern is the need for sensitivity in the scholarly use of intimate documents such as personal letters. As the historian Eve Annuk notes, there is a glaring contradiction between the public nature of archives and the private nature of letters. She argues that the will to know things and the right to conduct research does not always justify the invasion of someone's inner life, even if documents recording such information are freely available.[66] The judicious use of a person's intimate revelations is particularly important when that person no longer has the right of reply. Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir's statement that "exploring the life of a dead person is ... a great responsibility" is an obvious but crucial reminder to historians caught up in the oftimes exciting ebbs and swells of another's life.[67] Since it is neither practical nor desirable for this study to eschew archived personal documents, two principles suggested by other historians have been employed throughout. First, this dissertation's subjects are represented fairly, in that their motives are considered carefully and contextualized as far as the record allows. This is perhaps especially necessary in the case of imperial agents such as explorers, who have received much specific and generic criticism from postcolonial scholars for their parts in extending and consolidating colonial empires. Second, the value and relevance of incorporating the sensitive, unpublished revelations of these individuals into this dissertation has been constantly reviewed. Such information is used only when it aids the making of important and balanced arguments.[68]

Reflection upon the intimate nature of personal correspondence recalls attention to the affective facet of this activity, briefly touched upon before. Three common epistolary behaviours—reciprocity, expressions of pleasure, and reminders of friendship—smoothed and enriched the passage of information in these epistolary relationships and in such exchanges generally. The very act of personal correspondence is meant to assuage absence. Douglas, Stefansson, and Finnie saw each other several times a year at the most over their lives; at the

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[65] Stanley, "Epistolarium," 212-14.

[66] Eve Annuk, "Letters as a New Approach to History: A Case Study of an Estonian Poet Ilmi Kolla (1933-1954)," *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 15 (2007): 12.

[67] Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir, "Fragments of Lives—The Use of Private Letters in Historical Research," *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 15 (2007): 43.

[68] Annuk, "New Approach," 17; Halldórsdóttir, "Fragments," 43. On this subject, see also Margaretta Jolly, "On Burning, Saving and Stealing Letters," in "Reading Life Writing," eds. Cora Kaplan and Jenny Bourne Taylor, special issue, *New Formations* 67 (2009): 25-34.

least, it appears that decades elapsed without face-to-face contact. The frequent interspersal of personal and intellectual content in their letters reminds the reader of the bonds of affection for each other, as well as for the North, that sustained their lifelong friendships.

Reciprocity—the commitment to remain in contact—is the "fundamental ethical obligation in the epistolarity relationship." Not only does continuous exchange denote a measure of personal respect and affection for one's correspondent, but it also demonstrates one's respect for the time, effort, and emotion that he or she has invested in the act of creating and sending letters.[69] The corresponding relationships of Stefansson, Finnie, and Douglas displayed the usual schedule of one letter written for each received, save Stefansson's tendency, when he was working to a set deadline, to send multiple letters to one correspondent with separate queries in a short period of time. Periods of complete engrossment in personal or professional affairs sometimes necessitated the substitution of less time-intensive compromises for letters proper, such as an interesting article or carbon copy of another letter with a short personal note attached. Scattered throughout the compositions of all three—particularly late in Douglas's and Stefansson's lives, when their respective correspondences trailed off due to infirmity and preoccupation—are apologies for the inexcusable delay of their replies. These are often twinned with assurances of appreciation, so that no blame could be attributed to the receipt of an unsatisfactory letter. "I was already remorseful at the way I had neglected to write. Now your good letter comes which gives you A1 priority and myself much pleasure," Douglas once told Finnie.[70]

Such explicit expressions of pleasure belong to the category of epistolary ethics that David Gerber terms *emotional states described as related to sending and receiving letters*. They are meant to invoke a sense of intimacy between correspondents, and thus temporarily belay the distance between them.[71] The Stefansson-Finnie-Douglas letters demonstrate several variations of this convention, focussing alternately on the letter itself as an act of remembrance, on welcome content conveyed by a letter, or on fantasies of reunion in the near future.[72] "Your

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[69] Gerber, *Lives*, 102.

[70] Douglas to Finnie, 25 April 1959, File 6, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[71] David A. Gerber, "Epistolary Ethics: Personal Correspondence and the Culture of Emigration in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 19 (2000): 14-15. Gerber defines "epistolary ethics" as "informal, but for some correspondents explicit, agreements by which the exchange of letters was consensually organized to the benefit of both parties" (9).

[72] Again, these expressions are general to all correspondence, as Bernard Bray notes: "Whatever the immediate purpose of a letter may be ... the reading of the message should give the addressee a certain degree of pleasure .... The addressee in turn will respond by expressing satisfaction and praising the missive that he or she has received." Bray, "Letters: General Survey," trans. Monique Lamontagne, in *The*

letters are uniformly absorbing and instructive," Finnie wrote to Douglas in 1945 as he motored, with Alyce, across the southwestern United States. Having received a series of postcards from the travelling pair, Douglas replied that "it is really very good of you to keep us posted of your progress across the continent."[73] Several years earlier, in a letter written to Finnie and carbon copied to Douglas, Stefansson noted, "I wish we three could foregather; but these are hectic days ...."[74]

Similar, but more personal and specific statements are also found through the three correspondences, expressing esteem for the professional and personal traits that Douglas, Stefansson, and Finnie had initially liked in each other and which continued to enrich their friendships. Nor did such expressions end with their correspondences: years after the deaths of Douglas and Stefansson, in letters to others, Finnie continued to remember them with great fondness. The particular ways in which these friendships grew and flourished from the roots of personal meetings, and in which they created and used information about the North, will now be examined, beginning with that of Finnie and Stefansson.

The Finnie-Stefansson correspondence; or, the saleable North

Polite but to the point, often humorous, his letters were always stimulating. They gave as well as sought information, and the research they engendered was often mutually rewarding. Finnie on Stefansson[75]

Thirteen-year-old Richard Finnie was nervous. In the carriage next to his on the Trans-Canada Train sat the famous Arctic explorer, Vilhjalmur Stefansson. Finnie had already ducked into the carriage and sketched the explorer unobtrusively as he gave an interview to a newspaper reporter, but he still wanted Stefansson's autograph. His father's advice was to "go to it; he can't do more than refuse you." Happily for Finnie, Stefansson not only signed his portrait, but also made time for a short conversation, in which they touched upon Finnie's sourdough (Yukon) heritage and Stefansson's plan for the domestication of reindeer in Arctic Canada, as

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Encyclopaedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms, vol. 2, ed. Margaretta Jolly (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 553.

[73] Finnie to Douglas, 8 November 1945, File 3, Volume 7 and Douglas to Finnie, 10 December 1935, File 1, Volume 7; both MG31 C6, LAC.

[74] Stefansson to Finnie, 10 November 1943, MSS 196, RSC and File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

[75] Finnie, "My Friend Stefansson," 9.

well as their mutual love for the North.[76] When they met once more eleven years later, in 1931, they became friends.

Their correspondence, the most business-like of the three under consideration, is still marked by a warm economy of exchange. When they met, both Stefansson and Finnie were working as freelance writers who drew upon their experience and knowledge of the Arctic in order to write and sell newspaper and magazine articles and books. They came to depend on each other—and each other's personal networks. Through his father, the former Director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Canadian government, Finnie knew many of the civil servants and scientists who had worked in, or were concerned with the North. Stefansson was no longer very intimate with many of these people, due to his schism with the Canadian political and scientific establishment in the 1920s. Moreover, Finnie expanded his network of northern friends and acquaintances during his trips throughout the Canadian North in the 1920s and 1930s. On Stefansson's behalf, Finnie gathered current information about the Canadian Arctic both through personal interviews with well-placed sources and through scanning the Canadian newspapers. In return, Stefansson recommended Finnie to various publishers, magazine editors, and lecture managers, promoting him as "our favourite authority on the Canadian Arctic" in the hopes of finding him commissions.[77] This was no small act during the Depression years, when the Finnies, like many others, were barely earning enough to live upon.[78]

Though the exchange of such favours was undertaken out of nothing more than professional respect and personal goodwill at first, each took his self-assigned role seriously. In response to a query about "human-and-animal-fog" in the North, Finnie sent a careful answer that outlined his lack of personal or hearsay knowledge, the queries he had sent out to pursue the matter, and the predicted timeline along which replies would be forthcoming. The same letter offers fresh material on two older queries of Stefansson's which Finnie had not only remembered, but had also made inquiries about during his time in the North the previous summer.[79] In addition to his role as Finnie's unofficial American agent, Stefansson wrote letters of reference for Finnie's applications to the Explorers Club and to the John Simon Guggenheim

[76] Finnie, "Finnie Interviews Stefansson—June 20, 1920," MSS 196, RSC. Finnie credited this chance meeting as one of the factors that led him toward his Arctic career.
[77] Stefansson to Finnie, 20 December 1937, MSS 196, RSC and File 8, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. See, e.g., Stefansson to the Honorable Leonid M. Tolokonski, 21 April 1935; Stefansson to H.B. Gislason, 1 May 1936; Stefansson to Carl A. Marsden, 11 August 1938; Stefansson to L.C. McCloskey, 11 August 1938; all File 8, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[78] Finnie, "My Friend Stefansson," 13.
[79] Finnie to Stefansson, 2 December 1934, MSS 196, RSC.



Figure 4.1. Richard Finnie adds to the visual archive of the Canadian North near Bloody Falls, Coppermine, Northwest Territories during the spring of 1931. Credit: Library and Archives Canada / PA-101256.

Memorial Foundation for a Canadian research fellowship.[80] His dedication to such tasks is revealed in the plaintive closing sentence of one letter: "By the way, it is a long time since I have done anything for you and I am beginning to feel guilty."[81]

The intelligence demands of the Second World War soon provided an opportunity for Stefansson to make amends for any past failings. In late 1941, he was able to employ Finnie directly for six months as his Ottawa representative and researcher in the work he was doing for the American government's Office of the Coordinator of Information, which involved the gathering and collation of accurate geographical information about northern Canada. This role was essentially a more focussed, intensified, and paid incarnation of the informal work Finnie had already been carrying out for Stefansson, as this description indicates:

> Stef and his secretaries began firing questions at us by letter, telegram and telephone. How many people were in this or that northern settlement? What was the depth and rate of flow of this or that river? How much oil was being produced at Norman Wells? The questions were varied and often complex. ... [W]hatever information Stefansson needed that I did not have at hand I had to get from scattered sources. It took much telephoning and frequent runs to Ottawa.[82]

This was one major node of intersection between these private correspondence networks and the flows of political and military information between the Canadian and American governments during the Second World War. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor in

[80] Stefansson to Finnie, 29 September 1933, File 8, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Stefansson, 5 August 1940 and Evelyn Baird to Finnie in reply, 8 August 1940, both MSS 196, RSC.
[81] Stefansson to Finnie, 6 August 1938, File 8, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[82] Finnie, "My Friend Stefansson," 15-16.

December 1941, the United States became especially concerned about the proximity of the North American Arctic to the Axis powers. The North became a region in which collaborative strategic efforts such as the Northwest Staging Route (a chain of airfields between the Pacific Northwest and Alaska), the Alaska Highway, and the Canol pipeline depended upon the production and circulation of accurate knowledge about the North between the Canadian and American governments. Stefansson and Finnie aided this circulation by drawing upon and extending their established epistolary relationship to encompass the regular, rapid, and secure passage of the most current information about the Canadian North then available in government departments. Due to diplomatic and political entanglements, Stefansson's work for the American government was never formally ratified by the Canadian government; his exchange of information with Finnie, therefore, was conducted entirely outside official channels—and entirely within the bounds of their ostensibly personal and private correspondence—for the duration of their involvement with this work.

With the commercialization of their relationship and the sensitive and urgent nature of the work, however, several conditions of their correspondence had to be explicitly renegotiated. The most obvious change came in the vast increase in the numbers of letters they exchanged during the years of 1941 and 1942, in which they sent 383 letters and carbon copies to each other—approximately 43% of their surviving corpus. Issues of confidentiality also came to the fore. Stefansson asked that his letters not be shown to anyone, though Finnie was free to paraphrase or quote his words in other correspondence as long as Finnie's name, not Stefansson's, was attached to them. Moreover, in case he needed to send some of Finnie's research to Washington immediately, Stefansson requested that Finnie send two copies of each of his letters and that he keep business and personal matters completely separate in his correspondence, unlike their usual, relaxed epistolary manner which mixed such things liberally.[83]

The overlapping of personal and official relationships and their role in the production of arctic knowledge during wartime is worth some examination. Stefansson's ideal relationship with government departments was modelled upon his own approach to gaining information through warm, informal personal relationships. He hoped for "an informal arrangement with people who trust each other and work together with full confidence."[84] Finnie, however, had

[83] Stefansson to Finnie, 11 April 1942, File 10, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC and MSS 196, RSC; Stefansson to Finnie, 15 April 1942, File 10, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[84] Stefansson to Joseph Thorson (Minister, Department of National War Services, Canada), 15 December 1941, File 9, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

tried to make him see that the transmission of knowledge based on personal trust was an inappropriate and unsustainable model for use during times of war, when Canadian bureaucrats feared "to release any information except through approved, iron-bound channels."[85] Indeed, Stefansson's failure to have the Canadian government recognize his contract work for the Office of the Coordinator of Information put Finnie in a difficult personal position. Through his friendship with men like Diamond Jenness—who had been seconded to the Royal Canadian Air Force's Intelligence Service, where he served as assistant director—Finnie was able to glean "odd scraps of information" for Stefansson, and to secure information of an unclassified nature. But he simply could not openly and systematically demand confidential information on the basis of these friendships; that would be taking advantage, he felt, of the trust his friends in the civil service had placed in him.[86] Informal modes of sociability may have been sufficient for the circulation of arctic information in other, peaceful periods, but firmer political and diplomatic relationships were needed to reinforce the conduits of information during less trusting times.

Finnie's work for Stefansson put him not only under personal strain, but financial strain as well. Since Stefansson could only afford to pay him part-time wages, he had to continue doing freelance writing work as well—in theory. In practice, Finnie was working full-time on Stefansson's behalf, leaving him no time to give to other revenue-producing activities. "Moreover," he wrote to Stefansson, "the confidential nature of my duties makes it a delicate matter for me to publish very much on my own; for with any article I write about the North I risk criticism from the Government officials with whom I regularly deal on your behalf. The more I know, the less I can publish."[87] Although he greatly enjoyed the work he was doing for Stefansson, Finnie was coming to see that this embodiment of their relationship was untenable in the long term, unless he was paid significantly more. Twelve days later, as fate would have it, Stefansson, via a three-way telephone conversation from his office, was able to obtain a new, full-time job for Finnie with Bechtel-Price-Callaghan, the conglomerate of American companies contracted to build the Canol pipeline in the Yukon.[88] First as Canadian liaison officer and northern adviser, then as public relations officer and historian for the project, Finnie was fully occupied and paid for the next two years. Although their corresponding exchanges continued as before—Finnie and his wife Alyce gathered information and news for Stefansson informally,

[85] Stefansson to Thorson, 15 December 1941, File 9, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Stefansson, 27 November 1941, MSS 196, RSC.
[86] Finnie to Stefansson, 27 November 1941, MSS 196, RSC.
[87] Finnie to Stefansson, 13 May 1942, File 1, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC and MSS 196, RSC.
[88] "Telephone Conversation: V. Stefansson-Richard Finnie-Paul Grafe," 25 May 1942, MSS 196, RSC.

while Stefansson placed Finnie's name in front of editors and publishers—both realized that the bulk of Finnie's time and energy would now have to be directed elsewhere.

This shift in their relationship was not to be temporary. In early 1947, Finnie worked one more six-month stint on a contractual basis for Stefansson as the Canadian editor for the *Encyclopedia Arctica* (described in chapter 5). Once more the queries, letters, and telephone calls flew back and forth. However, in September of that year, Finnie was hired by the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line Company as the historian of a pipeline project in Lebanon. The following year, he was hired permanently by the Bechtel Corporation, which, as Bechtel-Price-Callaghan, had employed him on the Canol project. Finnie would spend the rest of his working life in Bechtel's service, a decision which ended his northern career. Stefansson, ever ready to celebrate his friends' successes, was pleased that he had been able to help Finnie in this manner: "[I]t is good to read ... that the telephone call from my rooms on Morton Street has led to a connexion that has been pleasant through now about a decade and all the way from the Far North to the Near East."[89]

By contrast, the connection between Stefansson and Finnie, in the form of regular correspondence, dropped off dramatically after 1947. From Finnie's perspective, it was not merely a matter of infrequency, but of Stefansson's lack of reciprocity in even their infrequent exchanges. He complained to Douglas:

> We never hear from Stef any more. Last fall he telegraphed a request for newspaper clippings about a man in Oakland who had just died—a man unknown to me who had traveled in Alaska. I took pains to get the clippings, but Stef never acknowledged them. Another time, after seeing an English film entitled 'Scott of the Antarctic' I sent Stef a query about a snowmobile shown in the film, but I'm still awaiting an answer. ... Alyce has been suggesting that I send a note to the Stefanssons to try to get them stirred up sufficiently to resume correspondence, but I'm going to compromise by mailing a carbon of this letter to Stef.[90]

Out of guilt, Stefansson replied promptly. He called their exasperation justifiable, and set out a series of plans to meet up and therefore rectify their absence in each other's lives.[91] Yet just as this wished-for meeting never came to pass, their correspondence never reached the same levels of intimacy again. Built more on exchanges of northern information than personal news, it inevitably suffered when one of its participants had neither a professional nor a personal

[89] Stefansson to Finnie, 8 September 1950, File 3, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC and MSS 196, RSC.
[90] Finnie to Douglas, 2 July 1950, File 4, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC and Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.
[91] Stefansson to Finnie, 7 July 1950, File 3, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC. It was likely not coincidental that Evelyn Stefansson sent Alyce Finnie a chatty note on the same day that begged Alyce's forgiveness for her recent lack of communication. Evelyn Stefansson to Alyce Finnie, 7 July 1950, File 3, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

investment in the North any longer. Finnie could offer no new or substantial answers to Stefansson's occasional arctic queries that came his way in the late 1950s.[92] Physical distance likewise separated them. Finnie's new career had occasioned his and Alyce's move to California, across the continent from the Stefanssons in New York and, later, New Hampshire. Despite regularly hearing news about each other's lives through their mutual friends Ed and Susie Weyer, they never met again after 1947.

Within this thirty-year correspondence, one finds much evidence not only of the symbiotic, profitable trade of northern information and expertise, but also of a deep and lively amity. Finnie and Alyce regarded Stefansson and Evelyn as two of their closest and most loyal friends, and their time of active association in the 1940s as stimulating and enjoyable, a period of challenge, change, and growth.[93] After hearing of Stefansson's death, Alyce wrote to Evelyn, "Stef has been a part of our lives and though we were out of touch we always felt he was there, and still a part of us. We are unhappy to lose him, but I don't think we shall ever truly lose him, and he will always be a part of us and our destiny."[94] Indeed, Stefansson had shaped that destiny to a significant degree.

The Stefansson-Douglas correspondence; or, the scholarly North

[T]here was always a certain amount of quizzical leg pulling between Stefansson and Douglas which added a certain astringency to the correspondence.
George Whalley[95]

"My dear Mr Stefansson," Douglas wrote in 1923, "you can scarcely be expected to remember me...."[96] This first preserved letter of their correspondence reminds him of their meeting in the American Museum of Natural History in New York ten years earlier. Douglas, with his brother Lionel and colleague August Sandberg, had recently returned from a mineralogical expedition to the Great Bear Lake region, while Stefansson was in the throes of preparation for the Canadian Arctic Expedition, to commence later that year. Both were early non-aboriginal explorers of the

[92] E.g. Stefansson to Paul Fenimore Cooper, "Cairns in King William Island," 25 February 1958, File 4, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Stefansson, 8 April 1958, File 4, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC and MSS 196, RSC; Stefansson to E.L. Bousfield, 25 February 1959, File 4, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Stefansson, 15 March 1959, MSS 196, RSC.
[93] Finnie to Evelyn Stefansson, 27 August 1962, File 4, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.
[94] Alyce Finnie to Evelyn Stefansson, 29 August 1962, File 4, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.
[95] George Whalley to Alan Cooke, 8 January 1964, File 14, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[96] Douglas to Stefansson, 10 April 1923, MSS 196, RSC. In 1956, Douglas tells George Whalley that he and Stefansson had "kept in touch ... for 48 years more or less." If their acquaintance (and correspondence?) began in 1908, there is no surviving record of it. Douglas to Whalley, 5 March 1956, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

western Canadian Arctic, and shared first-hand experience of an era known and remembered by very few others living outside northern Canada. To these memories of the recent past was added a common interest in a North more distant in time, particularly the nineteenth-century exploration of the Northwest Passage. Theirs was a correspondence liberally awash with personal and regional histories, in which memories and accounts of their own endeavours wove between speculation, query, and opinion on the primary and secondary literature of historical arctic exploration, in which they were both very well read.

Their appointed roles were somewhat similar to those of the Stefansson-Finnie relationship, in that Stefansson most often asked questions, and Douglas most often replied to them. However, a long-term correspondence between two individuals develops particular rhythms or patterns all its own. Their exchanges would typically start with a letter from Stefansson, inquiring, perhaps, about the natural phenomena of the North—average summer temperatures on Great Bear Lake, the "screaming" of ice, or cycles of rabbit breeding—or seeking historical data on specific northern sites, routes, or people.[97] At other times, Stefansson asked Douglas's opinions on northern colloquialisms, theories of the frontier, or the northern memories and historical interpretations of others.[98] He also placed epistemological conditions on Douglas's presentation of information, favouring first-hand, detailed, and objective answers. Early in their epistolary relationship, he asked for "as itemized and lengthy a description" of a meeting Douglas had witnessed between Dene and Inuit people near Dease River "as you have time for, giving every detail you can remember."[99] On several occasions, he asks Douglas for his "unbiassed [sic] recollection" of places and people with whom they were both familiar, in order to check the validity of his memory and records against those of Douglas.[100] In one instance, he

[97] Douglas to Stefansson, 13 June 1940 and Stefansson in reply, 3 October 1940, both MSS 196, RSC; Stefansson to Douglas, 13 December 1943 and Douglas in reply, 18 December 1943, both MSS 196, RSC; Douglas to Stefansson, 11 July 1950, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC and Files 17 and 23, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and File 15, Box 3, Location 1032c, QUA; Douglas to Stefansson, 30 July 1950, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC and File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and File 15, Box 3, Location 1032c, QUA; Stefansson to Douglas, 2 October 1950, MSS 196, RSC; Douglas to Stefansson, 6 October 1950, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC; Stefansson to Douglas, 5 December 1932, MSS 196, RSC; Douglas to Stefansson, 14 December 1932, MSS 196, RSC and File 21, Volume 4, MG30 B95, LAC; Stefansson to Douglas, 13 August 1950, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC and File 22, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and File 15, Box 3, Location 1032c, QUA; Douglas in reply, 16 August 1950, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC and Files 17 and 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and File 15, Box 3, Location 1032c, QUA.

[98] Stefansson to Douglas, 31 January 1952 and Douglas in reply, 18 February 1952, both MSS 196, RSC; Stefansson to Douglas, 26 October 1952, MSS 196, RSC; Douglas to Stefansson, 7 November 1952, MSS 196, RSC and File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC; Stefansson to Douglas, 6 June 1955 and Douglas in reply, 9 June 1955, both MSS 196, RSC.

[99] Stefansson to Douglas, 19 November 1925, MSS 196, RSC.

[100] Ibid. See also Stefansson to Douglas, 6 June 1955, MSS 196, RSC.

acknowledges that he might be "asking loaded questions," but he is certain Douglas is independent enough in mind not to be swayed.[101]

As with Finnie, again, Douglas would render prompt, careful answers based on his experience, records, and general knowledge of the North, as well as recourse to his personal network of northern correspondents. Such queries, however, also spurred him to search through his vast, disorganized collection of northern letters, books, newspaper, magazines, and photographs, seemingly as much for the pleasure of revisiting such texts as for the search for evidence. In response to one of Stefansson's queries, Douglas wrote, "Quite innocently you landed a job of digging through old stuff upon myself. However this is my fault for not having this same stuff in better order. And it turned up a lot of forgotten things."[102] With matters that interested Douglas greatly, as his self-imposed program of research progressed far beyond the bounds of the original question, Stefansson would continue to receive a trickle of letters from him on the same topic over the succeeding weeks, months, and sometimes years, if a new mention of an old query prompted Douglas's resurgent plunge into the archives.

This specific arc of question and answer(s) makes manifest the different attitudes of each toward the pursuit of northern fact. Stefansson's inquiries were always purposeful, and made usually as part of the immediate preparation for some kind of publication. Douglas enjoyed the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and rendered the fruits of his research predominantly in his letters to northern friends, since he published very little. One can also discern a difference in moral economy as to what kinds of inquiries were worth pursuing. As Finnie noted, "it is a Stefanssonian characteristic ... to grab hold of some idea and wrestle with it, however important or unimportant it may be."[103] While Douglas found Stefansson's inquiries "amusing" and "interesting," he regarded some of them as insignificant—or, rather, significant only in their relationship to wider matters. When Stefansson asked Douglas to help in his attempt to uncover the identity of the sender of a mysterious letter that had described Stefansson's exploits in the early twentieth-century North in somewhat sarcastic terms, Douglas wrote that the letter, "fit only for the wastepaper basket in itself, has led me into a lot of digging into the past history of the Mackenzie River Basin 1900-1910," and that it "has opened up some far more important and interesting trails than merely discovering his identity!"[104] In various

[101] Stefansson to Douglas, 26 October 1952, MSS 196, RSC.
[102] Douglas to Stefansson, 13 December 1948, MSS 196, RSC.
[103] Finnie to Douglas, 29 August 1947, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[104] Douglas to Stefansson, 12 May 1949, Box 30, MSS 96, SC; Douglas to Stefansson, 23 June 1949, Box 30, MSS 96, RSC and File 8, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC.

letters, Douglas suggests what he considers more appropriate topics for Stefansson's attention: mainly accounts, seminal or revisionary, of the deeds of past arctic explorers.[105] His sharp distinction between merely amusing or interesting past incidents and genuinely important, historic happenings may be one example of what George Whalley described as Douglas's "inflexible feeling for the integrity of the past."[106]

Indeed, their differences were deeper than topical. Under the invariably polite and amicable surface of their correspondence, there exists a complex adjudication of each other's scholarly preferences and capacities. While they certainly respected each other's intelligence and knowledge, they did not always agree in their approaches to northern scholarship. Indications of implicit and explicit tension are scattered throughout their letters to each other as well as Douglas's letters to Finnie and other friends.[107] Stefansson had an abiding appreciation of Douglas's precise memory and powers of observation, his lifelong dedication to the extension of northern knowledge, and his expert command of the histories of nineteenth-century exploration and the early twentieth-century western Arctic.[108] His main frustration with Douglas—one shared by many of the latter's friends—was Douglas's perpetual unwillingness to publish articles based on his experiences or research. Despite Stefansson's encouragement, Douglas only wrote under intense pressure, and displayed an array of anxieties about the quality of his small literary output.[109] By contrast, Douglas regarded Stefansson's work very highly, applauding his indefatigability in the pursuit of facts, as well as his breadth of Arctic knowledge and depth of understanding with regard to certain problems. Referring to another Arctic expert's article, he notes, "I am sure all this is kindergarten stuff to you, while I am not even in the kindergarten grade where these things are concerned."[110]

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[105] E.g. Douglas to Stefansson, 21 January 1939, 15 March 1944, and 13 December 1948; all MSS 196, RSC.
[106] George Whalley to Olwen Rodstrom, 15 July 1960, File 1, Box 3, Location 1032c, QUA.
[107] Mikhail Bakhtin reminds his readers that letters are always "half someone else's." Building on this thought, Gilroy and Verhoeven argue that correspondence may well promote "dissonance and difference as well as connection and community." Gilroy and Verhoeven, introduction to *Epistolary Histories*, 14-15.
[108] E.g. Stefansson to Douglas, 6 May 1949, Box 30, MSS 96, RSC; Stefansson to George Whalley, 23 April 1955, File 4, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC; Stefansson to Douglas, 20 December 1955, MSS 196, RSC; Douglas to Stefansson, 2 March 1958, MSS 196, RSC.
[109] Douglas writes apologetically to Stefansson that "I am one of these who won't work [i.e. write] unless I am forced to by circumstances, unless in fact a club is taken to make me." 12 December 1949, File 5, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC and Box 30, MSS 96, RSC. In a previous letter, Douglas worries that he is "entirely conscious of his deficiencies" in biographical writing and asks Stefansson to ensure that his "style ... is acceptable and suitable for [the] purposes" of Stefansson's *Encyclopedia Arctica*, for which he wrote two articles. 2 December 1949, File 5, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC and Box 30, MSS 96, RSC.
[110] Douglas to Stefansson, 25 June 1957, MSS 196, RSC and File 2, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC. Generally on this topic, see Douglas to Stefansson, 12 October 1951 and 4 June 1957, both MSS 196, RSC.

Douglas's appreciation of Stefansson's meritorious qualities was balanced with unease. Privately, he felt concern about Stefansson's methods of attracting attention to the Arctic and his ultimate purposes in doing so. His concerns appear most readily in his letters to other close friends. Aware of Stefansson's magnetic allure to a young man of Arctic aptitude, Douglas warns Finnie, early in their relationship, "I counsel you don't take him for a pattern! I am re-reading his 'Friendly Arctic' too bad so much good stuff should be marred by such unpleasant idiosyncrasies." To the distaste he felt for Stefansson's harping upon certain theories, he added Stefansson's showy propensity to "make capital out of well known things trading on a supposed (+ sometimes real) general ignorance." Douglas felt that such an approach was antischolastic in that it was calculated more to create a sensation than to further the cause of truth. He wished that Stefansson would confine his writings to "historical-ethnographical subjects" instead.[111]

On some such topics, they had scholarly disagreements over the interpretation of historical actions and documents. On one occasion, Douglas subtly challenged Stefansson's authority on the subject of Thomas Simpson. His musings about the relative neglect of Simpson in the historiography of nineteenth-century Arctic exploration earned a slightly sharp reply from Stefansson—"[Y]our note ... seems to imply that I too am less mindful than I should be of Thomas Simpson's abilities and achievements"—who then lists his writings on the topic.[112] While Douglas duly apologized for his misstep of memory in his next letter to Stefansson, his subsequent letters to Blanchet reveal that it was rather the inadequacy of Stefansson's account than his inattention to it that had elicited his initial comment.[113]

A more serious matter in Douglas's eyes was Stefansson's tendency to recount incidents of his Arctic career in a manner that highlighted his own choices and accomplishments. Late in his life, Douglas became aware of the existence of a collection of well-written letters by Cosmo Melville, a contemporary of theirs in early twentieth-century travel through the Great Bear Lake region. He agonized over whether or not to tell Stefansson about this valuable source material. One of his reasons against doing so was that Melville's version of one event "is rather different from the impression Stef gives in his book but agrees with Stef's account as in Stef's journal." In

[111] See Douglas to Finnie, 23 November 1936, 26 February 1938, 3 November 1941, and 9 November 1941; all File 1, Volume 7, MG30 B95, LAC. See also Philip Goldring, "Scientist and Showman," *The Beaver* 67, no. 2 (1987): 59-61; Richard J. Diubaldo, *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 212; William R. Hunt, *Stef: A Biography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Canadian Arctic Explorer* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 155-56, 162, 179-81.

[112] Douglas to Stefansson, 15 December 1955, MSS 196, RSC; Stefansson to Douglas, 20 December 1955, MSS 196, RSC.

[113] Douglas to Stefansson, 5 January 1956, MSS 196, RSC and File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA; Douglas to Blanchet, 3 January 1956 and 19 March 1956, both File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA; Douglas to Blanchet, 5 January 1956, File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA and MSS 196, RSC.

another letter debating the two versions, he calls Melville's "unquestionable."[114] In this case, Douglas seems to have feared that Stefansson was either unable or unwilling to behave in a truthful fashion. This desire to keep things from Stefansson, which manifests occasionally in Douglas's correspondence, may have arisen partly out of a fundamental asymmetry in their relationship.[115] Stefansson, the far greater public figure, drew upon Douglas's expertise frequently without crediting him in speech or publication, although thanking him privately. One can detect some strain on Douglas's part, a hint of feeling ill-treated, even though he had decided not to contribute very much to the public knowledge of the Arctic under his own name.

These undercurrents and asides of dissension should not obscure the generally good-natured and respectful tone of these letters, which abound in compliments for the quality of missives received as well as the minds that produced such documents. Their correspondence allowed each man to refresh his exploratory identity, long after his own fieldwork had ceased, through constant engagement with memories of first-hand experiences and with the accounts of predecessors in the northern exploratory tradition to which they also belonged. In their letters, they constructed knowledge based upon their own exploratory work, thereby affirming the value of their deeds. In their last years, Stefansson came to regard his "invaluable George Douglas archives of northern lore" as one of the most priceless correspondences he had undertaken in his life, and waged a campaign for its preservation in perpetuity, as described in chapter 6. Meanwhile, Douglas, increasingly frail and overwhelmed by the demands of rural life, appreciated and enjoyed Stefansson's letters and carbon copies all the more. [116] Their correspondence seems to have ceased at the beginning of 1960; both correspondents passed away within the next three years.

The Douglas-Finnie correspondence; or, the sentimental North[117]

Then, of course, there was George M. Douglas, who was in a class by himself and who was a great friend of mine. Finnie[118]

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[114] The quotations are from Douglas to Whalley, 2 February and 5 March 1956, both File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. See also Douglas to Finnie, 23 January and 29 February 1956, both File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. For comment on Stefansson's diaries generally, see Gísli Pálsson, introduction to *Writing on Ice: The Ethnographic Notebooks of Vilhjalmur Stefansson*, ed. Gísli Pálsson (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001), 26-33.

[115] E.g. Douglas to P.G. Downes, 10 and 23 March 1952, both File 5, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.

[116] Stefansson to Douglas, 30 September 1955, MSS 196, RSC; Douglas to Stefansson, 1 March 1959, MSS 196, RSC and File 12, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC.

[117] "As you well know I am very sentimental about things ...." Douglas to Alyce Finnie, 18 September 1942, File 1, Volume 1, MG31 C6, LAC.

[118] Finnie to Dudley Copland, 1 October 1976, File 12, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

...Douglas is profoundly a thinking man with a whole ethical-cultural system which he has selected from experience and reflection.
P.G. Downes[119]

As above, so below: the subject of these epigraphs dominates the correspondence of which he was technically only one-half. The quirk of preservation mentioned before has rendered more than half of Finnie's letters and postcards to Douglas unavailable to historians. Their echo is still apparent in many of Douglas's replies, which often begin, in model epistolary fashion, by thanking Finnie for his letter and by mentioning some of its details, such as its originating location, date of posting or arrival, and its highly interesting pieces of news. However, the strong emergence of Douglas's personality from the pages of his surviving letters, combined with the auto/biographical nature of their correspondence's subject matter, provides an excellent opportunity to reflect further on the place of the individual within a particular long-term northern correspondence. Since Douglas was a technically gifted and prolific correspondent, fully aware of the character of the medium in which he had chosen to inscribe most of his northern knowledge, it is also worth noting how the conventions of the epistolary form pervaded and influenced his and, where discernable, Finnie's conveyance of personal and northern content. The spatial and temporal quirks of letters and letter writing make plain the singular conditions under which Douglas's northern knowledge was housed and distributed.

Of the three correspondences under discussion, this one ranks as the most personal. Although Douglas and Finnie both spent time working in the North before and after their letters commenced, the region entered their letters as a place of mutual endeavour, interest, and appreciation, discussed mainly for delight. Personal correspondence can confirm and maintain particular identities, particularly in the presence of those with whom one has shared a common background.[120] In Douglas's and Finnie's letters, through the exchange of their opinions, memories, and experiences of the North, their identities as men of the North persisted even as they dwelt in southern climes.[121] A significant component of their performance of northern selves consisted of sharing news, whether obtained through hearsay, letter, or visit, of mutual northern acquaintances—those still living there or those, like themselves, who had settled elsewhere. Both men had known many of the northern fieldworkers who worked in Ottawa in

[119] Downes to Finnie, 21 December 1952, File 5, Volume 6, MG31 C6, LAC.
[120] Gerber, *Authors*, 3.
[121] A discussion of the role that correspondence played in preserving feminine medical identities may be found in Barbara Brookes, "A Corresponding Community: Dr Agnes Bennett and Her Friends from the Edinburgh Medical College for Women of the 1890s," *Medical History* 52 (2008): 237-56.

the 1920s, and both had travelled with some of them or had met them during their stints in the North or in Ottawa. Their letters mentioned friends such as Jenness, the botanist A.E. Porsild, and the mining engineer J.B. Tyrrell. Newer administrators and scientists—Hugh Keenleyside, Thomas Manning, Graham Rowley—also made appearances.

The three most consistently mentioned people, however, were very good friends to them both: Stefansson, Blanchet, and the teacher and explorer P.G. Downes. All had strong personalities and active natures, both of which yielded much fodder for conversation; all were also erratic correspondents. Many a time Douglas or Finnie would mention their names only to ask if the other had heard from them recently, or to wonder what had happened to keep them from writing. There was no question of confronting such renegade correspondents directly. As William Decker notes,

> However desperate for a reply, ... a letter writer must resist questioning the partner's will to requite epistolary attentions, for the exchange economy of the correspondence is founded on a transcendent belief in the mutuality of the will to correspond. ... To question the partner's commitment is to bring about a crisis in the correspondence....[122]

Douglas and Finnie's correspondence gave them a safe place to express their frustration and worry over the silence of their friends. Moreover, in sharing the scraps of news or contents of letters they received from Stefansson, Blanchet, and Downes from time to time, and in trading reminiscences and reflections on these men's past and present actions (of which they could either approve or disapprove), they performed and thereby continued these slack epistolary friendships. Such renewals by proxy were necessary when the actual relationships were not sustained directly, due to their friends' disappointingly poor reciprocity.

Although others figured in their discussion, it is dominated by their personalities and doings. Letters, more than any other texts, highlight the unique circumstances of their production as the result of a specific occasion—perhaps the receipt of a letter—and their place in a relationship between a specific writer and reader. They also stridently proclaim their situation as regards time, space, and personal circumstance. Indeed, the time and space of Douglas's letters, revealed in exquisite detail by the characteristics of the epistolary form, is of as much interest as the content itself. Certain spatial and temporal considerations imbue letter-writing: distance between people is the reason for the letter's existence, and a time lag is inevitable between its writing and its reading.[123] Letters play with perceptions of time: old when

[122] Decker, *Epistolary Practices*, 58-59.
[123] Barton and Hall, introduction to *Letter Writing*, 6.

they arrive at their destination, they are nonetheless new to the person reading them for the first time. The place in which the letter is written is often described in detail, perhaps in order to evoke intimacy by providing a familiar, well-loved backdrop which, at the time of writing and reading—two distinct times that somehow merge—correspondents can imaginatively share.[124] In such ways, letters collapse distance to create proximity.[125] Douglas's letters to Finnie overflow with references to Northcote, his farm and wild property on the Kawartha Lakes. The Finnies visited as often as they could, and the place's advantages were well appreciated by both correspondents, who exchanged stories about the joys of rural Ontario living. Understanding Douglas's circumstances, as related through his letters, reveals the extent of his investment in epistolary relationships and the rationale behind his selective participation in discussions of the North.

As already seen in chapter 2, Douglas had an enduring connection to the past which manifested not only in northern surroundings, but those of the south as well. By his own admission, he lived a "wild life ... obsolete by modern standards."[126] In one letter to Douglas's biographer, Enid Mallory, Finnie attempts to describe its eccentricity to one who had never witnessed it:

> Although George was a trained engineer and geologist, abreast of modern technology and exceptionally versatile in knowledge and talent, his lifestyle at home veered toward the 19th Century. He scorned electricity and indoor plumbing. He had outboard motors but always preferred to paddle or sail his many canoes. He had a car ... but he avoided driving it. He bicycled, snowshoed, skied or sailed according to seasonal conditions whenever he could.[127]

Douglas's letters pulse with his vibrant movement through what he termed his "own little wilderness."[128] Chores of maintenance demanded his presence throughout the property, but he also lived a peripatetic life for the sheer delight of it. One can track his and Kay's seasonal movements through his letters by coupling the date with the name of the residence stamped atop the sheet of paper. When autumnal days came on, the Tool House, a log dwelling built in the 1840s, was their main residence, from whence they moved to the Winter Quarters, another cabin of similar vintage, or Northcote Farm (the "big house" nestled on the shore of Katchiwano Lake) in the chilliest season. In spring, they often occupied the Tool House once more, and

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[124] Gerber, *Authors*, 126.
[125] Jan Montefiore, "'Dear Reader': Definitions of the Epistolary Self," *Journal of European Studies* 32 (2002): 105-6.
[126] Douglas to Stefansson, 7 November 1952, File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and MSS 196, RSC.
[127] Finnie to Mallory, 3 July 1978, File 7, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[128] Douglas to Finnie, 11 May 1948, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

sometimes the "Floater" (a small houseboat). With the arrival of summer, Douglas would wander his wider domain. He enjoyed spending time at a small cabin, which he had built in 1915, on Wee Island, half an acre of rocky protrusion out of Stoney Lake. He also made frequent trips to "Sing Kettle" or Syndicate Island, also on Stoney Lake, and on which lay the roughest and barest of his residences, built in 1939.[129]

Douglas had travelled the world widely—had circumnavigated it twice, indeed—in his early and middle-aged life. Yet in his retirement, the period from which most of his correspondence dates, moving around his own land gave him more pleasure than departing it for other places. As he aged and his hearing, which had never been good, worsened, he developed a strong dislike of cities and excessive socialization. His main contact with the world came through the many newspapers, professional journals, and magazines to which he subscribed, the books which he ordered from dealerships, and the letters he received from his many correspondences. When he was not moving about, he was reading or writing, and his reflections on northern books and letters fill many of his pages to Finnie.

Douglas's letters reveal his complicated relationships between past and present times and places; these kinds of temporal and spatial reflections have been shown to date back to the 1920s. He changed little as he aged. As Finnie commented wryly, "You are the only man we know who could wear the same clothes and put on the same skis—and use them!—after forty years."[130] Objects at Northcote were similarly well preserved, to the extent where Douglas noted that he was finally burning wood in 1947 that had been cut in 1913.[131] Like many aging letter writers, he increasingly interwove the past and present in his letters. Having lived at Northcote as a boy, he had weather records of the area dating back to the 1880s, and he liked to compare days and seasons present and past. This temporal duality was also evident in descriptions of his chosen life: "For people who live 80 years behind the times Xmas of 1955 has become a quite serious strain...."[132] There are also a number of comparisons drawn between conditions at Northcote in the 1940s and 1950s and the North of old. Douglas's own little wilderness seems also to have been his own little Northland. This oft-drawn parallel in his

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[129] Enid Mallory, *Coppermine: The Far North of George M. Douglas* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1989), 256-57.

[130] Finnie to Douglas, 29 April 1951, File 4, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[131] Douglas to Finnie, 13 January 1947, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[132] Douglas to Finnie, 2 January 1956, File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. In a letter dated 18 September 1942, Douglas describes a solo trip into northern Ontario as akin to travelling back in time: "[T]here was nothing in my surroundings, nor equipment, nor actions, to remind me of any date later than 1910. ... When I got back to the settled country I was projected from 1910 to 1942 and can say with a force and authority granted to few that the world of 1942 has degraded into a heel of a mess." Douglas to Alyce Finnie, 18 September 1942, File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

letters, combined with his oft-mentioned strenuous mode of living, suggests that part of Douglas's continuing authority to speak about the North may have lain in his determined recreation and navigation of early twentieth-century northern conditions in mid twentieth-century southern Ontario, performed as assiduously in his correspondence as in his actions.[133]

Through his odd lifestyle, Douglas willed his nostalgic wish to live in the past into a semblance of reality. With Spenglerian precision, he often outlined his theories of the decline of civilization: he believed that its peak, in terms of the general well-being, happiness, and culture of people, was reached in England in 1897, in the United States in 1904, and in Canada in 1910[134]—a trajectory that, not coincidentally, paralleled his own through those places. In his senescence, he frequently mentioned his lack of desire to see what would inevitably be the shadowy ruins of once glorious cities and countries that he had loved.[135] Douglas's self-imposed isolation contrasted sharply with Finnie's travels around the world as part of his work for Bechtel; his accounts of epic, whirlwind trips through places were stamped with exotic names and connotations.[136] Nevertheless, their vastly differing experiences of space and time little impeded the conviviality of their correspondence.

Douglas's lifestyle affected not only the content of his letters, but also their form. The quality and frequency of his letters was directly determined by the amount and the difficulty of the physical labour he first had to complete. He noted with regret in late 1958 that "my days are now so taken up with the essential chores demanded by the rough and primitive life I lead that writing of any serious kind has become difficult."[137] Many such statements dot his letters, exemplifying the category of epistolary ethics that Gerber terms *processes and techniques of writing*. By pointing to the difficult material circumstances under which letters are written, their

[133] E.g. Douglas to D'Arcy Arden, 21 October 1918, File 33, Volume 1, MG30 B95, LAC; Douglas to Blanchet, 30 July 1950, File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC; Douglas to Alyce Finnie, 18 September 1942 and 12 January 1943, both File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Douglas to Finnie, 2 May 1947, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Douglas to Finnie, 16 July 1957, File 5, Volume 7, MG30 B95, LAC. It is interesting to note that the Kawartha Lakes region served as an environmental facsimile of the North for students from the geography department at Trent University in the 1960s and 1970s. Such students would undertake fieldwork there in the winter in order to prepare themselves for later fieldwork at the department's field stations in northern Quebec and Labrador. See Peter Adams, *Trent, McGill, and the North: A Story of Canada's Growth as a Sovereign Polar Nation* (Peterborough, ON: Cover to Cover Publication Services, 2007), 84, 89-90, 94.

[134] Douglas to Alyce Finnie, 18 September 1942; Douglas to Finnie, 30 April 1943; both File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[135] E.g. Douglas to Finnie, 5 November 1948, File 3; Douglas to Finnie, 28 April 1949, File 4; Douglas to Finnie, 17 December 1958, File 6; all Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[136] E.g. Finnie to Douglas, 25 October 1949, 5 November 1950, and 4 July 1951, all File 4, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Douglas to Finnie, 14 January 1960, File 6, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[137] Douglas to Stefansson, 11 November 1958, MSS 196, RSC and File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.

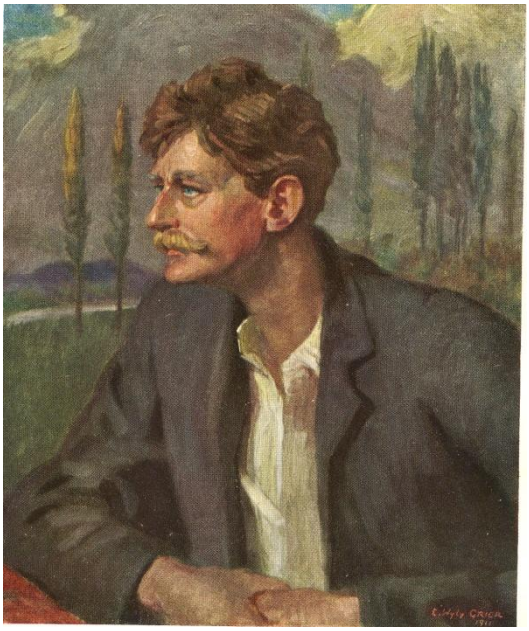

Figure 4.2. "The Master of Northcote," painted by E. Wyly Grier in 1911. Credit: Douglas, *Lands Forlorn.*

composers implicitly or explicitly ask forgiveness for their text's perceived shortcomings.[138] Douglas often invokes the pressure of work to explain a letter's early truncation: "I have been fairly harassed by various circumstances this autumn + am under too much pressure to write as fully as I should like," he writes apologetically to Finnie.[139] The material condition of other holographs bear added testament to general and specific difficulties that Douglas encountered and described. He often apologizes for his unskilled typing or bad handwriting, tasks hampered by stiff joints caused by too much labour or by the oncoming of darkness in the few moments he has snatched for writing. A fire on the Floater occasioned the use of singed paper for Douglas's letters for a time. The uneven folds of a letter denote the trouble Douglas had folding paper after his arm was broken by the kick of a horse's hoof.[140]

Other, more neutral markers of Douglas's life also obtrude upon his correspondence, such as his habit of spreading out his books and papers amongst his many dwellings. Writing from his office at Northcote, he blames his poor memory of Finnie's previous letter on the fact that "most of my various unanswered letters are on the table at Wee I. I intended to go up there today, but it is raining and I'll do the best I can here."[141] His distance from the post office is often

[138] Gerber, "Epistolary Ethics," 15; Gerber, *Authors*, 129-31.
[139] Douglas to Finnie, 21 November 1949, File 4, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[140] Douglas to Stefansson, 5 March 1957, MSS 196, RSC and File 23, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC; Douglas to Finnie, 5 February 1952, File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Douglas to Finnie, 29 September 1946 and 6 July 1947, both File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[141] Douglas to Finnie, 6 September 1951, File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

cited in playful combination with how the letter shall be delivered under present weather conditions. Comments like "I'll probably take this to mail by canoe," or "I see another cold bicycle ride ahead of me now!" round out some of his letters, as do postscripts written at the post office that verify or amend his predictions as to the trip there.[142] Though written in light-hearted fashion, they underscore the great dedication Douglas had to his many correspondents despite the difficulties that accompanied the peculiar manner in which he lived.[143] Respectful of his choice, Finnie and his other friends yet lamented his "distressing preoccupation with household chores" that acted either as an obstruction to or an excuse for his tendency to publish very little.[144] Douglas's correspondences, by contrast, flourished for most of his life; they are his main textual northern legacy. Their careful perusal reveals and confirms how letters, by their appearance and set formulae as well as their content, may construct lives and relationships as much as convey information and opinion.

Valediction

Letters have impact. They are not merely "narrow, autonomous literary accomplishments," but have consequences: they evoke discussion and negotiation, they result in responses.[145] The letters of Douglas, Stefansson, and Finnie, written to each other and their friends, constitute an entire textual world revolving around the North, containing real people, events and dates, as well as less tangible mélanges such as recollections, memories, and fantasies, news, gossip, and speculation, and facts and opinions. Just as this world was underwritten by courteous interpersonal behaviour, their letters, when broken down into sets of correspondence, also provide social means of continuing identities and relationships informed by shared northern experiences, comrades, and interests. They also provide evidence that, at least in some circles of

[142] Douglas to Finnie, 27 September 1939 and 10 January 1942, both File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. See also Douglas to Finnie, 2 December 1942 and Douglas to Alyce Finnie, 16 April 1943, both File 1; Douglas to Finnie, 18 April 1947, File 3; all Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[143] As Alan T. McKenzie notes generally of letter writers, "It took a fair amount of resolution to produce a letter worth sending and worth receiving and much more to produce a whole correspondence ...." McKenzie, introduction to *Sent as a Gift*, 8.

[144] Finnie to Stefansson, 28 July 1947, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. In the obituary of Douglas that Finnie wrote for the journal *Arctic*, he notes cryptically that Douglas "wrote well and kept journals of all his journeys, ... yet he published only one book and a couple of articles for technical magazines. There were conspicuous reasons for this." Finnie, "George Mellis Douglas (1875-1963)," *Arctic* 38 (1985): 76. The preceding discussion has tried to reconstruct some of the reasons that may have seemed conspicuous to Finnie, but are less so today.

[145] Barton and Hall, introduction to *Letter Writing*, 4.

correspondence, models of natural historical inquiry continued to inform the production of a particularly exploratory form of knowledge well into the mid-twentieth century.

Letters offered different individual possibilities to each of the people considered here. They allowed Douglas, a social recluse, to retain a wide network of sociability, to engage other northern thinkers and writers in debate, and thus to exercise an influence over the public representation of the North much greater than his limited publications themselves warranted. Finnie's epistolary ties to Stefansson sustained his freelancing career, enabled him to complete useful wartime work, and eventually launched him upon a new career that occupied fully half his working life. Through letters, Stefansson had access to the broadest possible remit of northern memory, expertise, and opinion with which he buttressed his many publications—which, in turn, informed millions of Americans, including those in high and powerful positions, about the Arctic, as the last chapter illustrated. These letters were consequential in small and large ways.

This chapter has demonstrated on a variety of scales how the circulation of northern information and the making of northern knowledge within these epistolary exchanges and networks was affected and effected as much by personal circumstances and interpersonal relationships as by the mere availability of the necessary factual materials. It has drawn upon theoretically sophisticated models of other knowledge networks both for their transferable salience and, unabashedly, for their cerebral weight. One of the first steps in convincing scholars to take the social and intellectual relationships between twentieth-century northern explorers seriously is to locate an appropriately vigorous framework for such arguments. At the moment, such structures exist only in studies of other times and places more often graced with the attention of intellectual history or the social studies of knowledge. Against this trend, and continuing the attention of this chapter to the qualities of northern knowledge, the next chapter will consider a communal scholarly project of monumental proportion: the *Encyclopedia Arctica*.

Chapter 5: The *Encyclopedia Arctica*

One of the interesting things about the Encyclopedia
is that much of the time it is like walking a tight rope.
I hope we won't take too many tumbles.
Olive Wilcox[1]

On December 1, 1946, Vilhjalmur Stefansson signed contract N6ONR-265, binding himself to the completion, on or before December 31, 1949, of an "Encyclopedia Arctica" for the Office of Naval Research of the United States Navy. This act had immediate precursors in Stefansson's post-exploratory career as an arctic scholar, and the consequences of its failure would reverberate to the end of his life. A personally significant undertaking, it must also be seen as part of a tradition of encyclopedic endeavour that Plato and Pliny had inaugurated several millennia before. The *Encyclopedia Arctica* does not require detailed situation within this history in order to be comprehensible. A preliminary, circumscribed stroll back through the centuries will illustrate one key atypicality of what Stefansson aspired to achieve.

The sheer scale of encyclopedias, their "daunting kilometers of library space," often deters close scholarly engagement with these texts.[2] The much-examined exception is the *Encyclopédie*; *ou, Dictionnaire raisonée des sciences, des arts, et des métiers, par une société des gens des lettres*, published in Paris in 17 volumes between 1751 and 1765.[3] Its editors, the *philosophes* Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, attempted to strain both ancient, settled knowledge and that produced by the emerging Enlightenment through the sieve of philosophical thought, sometimes to controversial effect. Much of their endeavour's framework was indebted to prior encyclopedic practice, especially that of their nominal base text, the

[1] Olive Wilcox to Stefansson, 2 December 1947, Box 28, MSS 96, The Encyclopedia Arctica Manuscript, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (hereafter cited as RSC). This manuscript has also been fully digitized and is available for access at the Rauner Special Collections Library website.
[2] Richard Yeo, "Reading Encyclopedias: Science and the Organization of Knowledge in British Dictionaries of Arts and Sciences, 1730-1850," *Isis* 82 (1991): 26.
[3] The vast scholarship on the *Encyclopédie* is beyond the ken of this dissertation. Works that have shaped the methodological inquiry of this chapter, in addition to those cited specifically, include Daniel Brewer and Julie Candler Hayes, eds., *Using the* Encyclopédie*: Ways of Knowing, Ways of Reading* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002); Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the* Encyclopédie*, 1775-1800* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 1979); Darnton, "Philosophers Trim the Tree of Knowledge: The Epistemological Strategy of the *Encyclopédie*," in *The Great Cat Massacre, and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), 191-213.

English bookseller Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia*. But two of its features were novel: its acknowledged communal composition, and its avowed desire to instigate social change.[4]

In the entry "Encyclopédie," Diderot's critical reflection on the undertaking, he argues that it "cannot be completed except by a society of men of letters and skilled workmen, each working separately on his own part, but all bound together solely by their zeal for the best interests of the human race and a feeling of mutual good will."[5] Indeed, the social capital that Diderot had cultivated in the salons and cafés of Paris throughout his adult life provided the basis for his enrollment of friends, friends of friends, acquaintances, readers of his work, and other willing volunteers in encyclopedic composition.[6] It was the first encyclopedia in modern times to boast collective authorship, and its successful resumption of this model catalyzed its enshrinement in successive works such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[7]

Although the nature of the causal relationship between the *Encyclopédie* and the French Revolution is a matter of scholarly dispute, there is little doubt that Diderot wanted his work to have "the power to change men's common way of thinking."[8] Beyond the explicitly polemical articles it contains, the *Encyclopédie*'s complex system of cross-references, or *renvois*, placed disparate ideas side by side to provoke conclusions antithetical to prevailing political and religious sentiment. Diderot hoped that all readers would pursue these leads, thereby exercising their intellects. Meanwhile, d'Alembert, in his prefatory *Discours préliminaire*, imagined a newly enlightened society in which men of letters received high regard. These men would guide others in gaining, disseminating, and contesting useful knowledge, so that the children of humanity, "as they become better educated, may at the same time become more virtuous and more happy, and that we may not die without having deserved well of the human race."[9] In writing learned articles generally and in critiquing political and social norms where necessary within the

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[4] Frank A. Kafker, "The Role of the *Encyclopédie* in the Making of the Modern Encyclopedia," in *The* Encyclopédie *and the Age of Revolution*, eds. Clorinda Donato and Robert M. Maniquis (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1992), 20.

[5] Denis Diderot, "The Encyclopedia," in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works*, trans. Jacques Barzun and Ralph H. Bowen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1956), 283.

[6] Frank A. Kafker, "The *Encyclopédie* in Relation to the Nine Predecessors," in *Notable Encyclopedias of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Nine Predecessors of the* Encyclopédie, ed. Frank A. Kafker (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1981), 235.

[7] The Brethren of Purity at Basra compiled an encyclopedia some time before 1000 CE, but this feat was rarely duplicated in the 700 years following. Robert Collison, *Encyclopaedias: Their History throughout the Ages: A Bibliographical Guide with Extensive Historical Notes to the General Encyclopaedias Issued throughout the World from 350 B.C. to the Present Day* (New York & London: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966), 41-42.

[8] Diderot, "Encyclopedia," 296.

[9] Ibid., 277.

Encyclopédie, these *gens de lettres* could ameliorate the mortal condition through universal education.

While expert contribution is a standard feature of modern encyclopedias, these works have not likewise shouldered the mantle of social criticism. That evasion, Robert M. Maniquis argues, ensures the "loss of the social image one finds in the *Encyclopédie*, one that invites the notion of an author and a reader continually sharing both knowledge and the sense of their human communality."[10] Frank A. Kafker doubts that a modern encyclopedia could foment political and religious reform, in that experts and publishers alike would be unwilling to associate with such a potentially hazardous venture. Today's encyclopedias must settle for being semi-popular repositories of learning: valuable in view of the rapid expansion of factual knowledge, but hardly stirring to the imagination.[11] This assessment does not consider the possibility that subject-specific encyclopedias, which became increasingly common in the twentieth century, could have been a propitious haven for intellectual experimentation. Indeed, the *Encyclopedia Arctica* proposed a new world in which the North was squarely front and centre.

This chapter will examine the *Encyclopedia Arctica*'s historical significance and initiate, through analysis, its contribution to geographies of postwar arctic knowledge. It will tell the Encyclopedia's story more substantively than hitherto. None of Stefansson's biographers have given it more than passing consideration, and even those summaries often contain factual errors.[12] What follows will flesh out the facts set down in Philip Cronenwett's brief but authoritative writings on the project.[13] The *Encyclopedia*, in receiving funding from the American military, was imbricated within the postwar academic-industrial-military complex that sought control over unknown and hostile regions through research into their specificities. Yet Stefansson, as editor-in-chief, drew upon particularly exploratory sensibilities in selecting his

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[10] Robert M. Maniquis, "Encyclopedias and Society: Order, Disorder, and Textual Pleasure," in *Age of Revolution*, 85.

[11] Kafker, "Modern Encyclopedia," 24.

[12] See Gísli Pálsson, *Travelling Passions: The Hidden Life of Vilhjalmur Stefansson*, trans. Keneva Kunz (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005), 263-67; William R. Hunt, *Stef: A Biography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Canadian Arctic Explorer* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 257-60; Henry F. Srebrnik, "The Radical 'Second Life' of Vilhjalmur Stefansson," *Arctic* 51 (1998): 60; D.M. LeBourdais, *Stefansson: Ambassador of the North* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1963), 183-84.

[13] Philip N. Cronenwett, "The *Encyclopedia Arctica*: A Lost Opportunity?", *Dartmouth College Library Bulletin* 42 (2001): 40-49; Cronenwett, "Encyclopedia Arctica," in *Encyclopedia of the Arctic*, ed. Mark Nuttall, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2004), 558-59; Cronenwett, "The *Encyclopedia Arctica*: A Gateway Opened, A Gateway Closed," in *Gateways: Archives and Libraries into the Next Millennium: Proceedings of the 18th Polar Libraries Colloquy held at the Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 12-17 June 2000*, ed. Barbara E. Kelcey (Winnipeg: Polar Libraries Colloquy, 2000), 28-33.

contributors, in assigning to them particular kinds of studious expertise different to those enacted in other spaces of wartime and postwar arctic research, and in continuing to foreground the importance of including subjects from the humanities alongside those of the physical, natural, and social sciences. Stefansson also viewed the *Encyclopedia* primarily as a vehicle for popular education about the region, rather than as a contribution to specifically scientific and academic discourses.

This chapter argues that the *Encyclopedia Arctica* may be seen as the embodiment and (re)production of an international community of arctic scholars, one constructed primarily through Stefansson's networks of correspondence. By drawing upon and drawing together textual and experiential knowledge about the northern circumpolar world, this community, under Stefansson's guidance, would create an encyclopedia intended to educate the public about the Arctic, and to induct them, ultimately, into this arctic republic. As the *Encyclopédie* was the central material representation of the Enlightenment, so would the *Encyclopedia Arctica* serve this community. Its demise will be explained as the outcome, in part, of an opposing characterization of arctic knowledge fuelled by American political exigencies of the early Cold War era.

To sustain this thesis, one must scrutinize the physical, social, and intellectual workings of this community, but without assuming undue homogeneity. There were two distinct communities at work: that of the expert contributors scattered throughout the world, and that of the Stefansson Library, where a team of researchers produced half of the *Encyclopedia*'s wordage under its eponym's supervision. The multi-sited nature of this venture calls attention to the spatial dimensions of intellectual production. The ordering and coordination of these sites required the use of certain material and epistemological technologies. Central to these inquiries is the need to understand the various conditions under which arctic knowledge was created, contested, and finally accepted for publication. Evidence of these processes lies in the voluminous correspondence, memoranda, and other records formulated over the years of the project. Special consideration will be given to the draft entries on twentieth-century Canadian explorers and exploration, both because of their importance to the concerns of this dissertation generally and because of their excellent depictions of the aforementioned processes. The *Encyclopedia*'s intellectual products were of most meaning, in a final twist, to the authors themselves, rather than any projected, and then finally absent, public audience.

Antecedents: library and liaison

Most scholarship on Stefansson lavishes attention on his early career in contradiction of his wish, voiced at his eightieth birthday party, that he be remembered as a polar scholar rather than an arctic explorer.[14] One of his major bequests to twentieth-century arctic scholarship was his creation of a comprehensive polar library, a project which he began in 1923. The Stefansson Library was an integral component in the alignment of events that led to the *Encyclopedia* contract, and later provided the raw information from which half of the *Encyclopedia* was composed. It was also an early manifestation of the (North) American desire, which quickened in the Second World War, to gather and organize information about the circumpolar Arctic. Upon this general base of knowledge would be poised rigorous scientific investigations and essential geopolitical defences.

Few books were available to Stefansson in childhood, but those precious religious and classic volumes instilled in him a passionate appreciation for the written word.[15] One can therefore imagine the delight with which he received the library's nucleus, several hundred volumes of polar subjects, as a gift from his friend Isaiah Bowman, then president of the American Geographical Society. The expansion of his library became Stefansson's chief pastime. During his travels on the lecturing circuit, he visited secondhand bookstores in many cities. He traded lectures and advice for books, copies of his own books for others he wanted, and waited patiently for yet other titles to come within his reach.[16] Unlike many collections meant for display rather than use, Stefansson and his assistant Olive Wilcox consulted this library frequently as they prepared his manuscripts for publication. By the early 1930s, it boasted 10,000 items and had become a semi-public institution. Although it was still housed in Stefansson's living quarters as well as nearby apartments, it had gained a small staff capable of handling casual queries. Arctic scientific and exploratory fieldworkers often visited the library before and after their stints in the field. Evelyn Stefansson recalled that "it was our custom to try to help 'brief' them, to lend them any rare books they couldn't obtain elsewhere, show them what their predecessors in a given area had written, and arrange for introductions to people

[14] Thomas P. Anderson and Carol Anderson, "Recollections of Stefansson in Hanover," in *Vilhjalmur Stefansson and the Development of Arctic Terrestrial Science*, eds. G. Edgar Folk, Jr. and Mary A. Folk (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1984), 47.
[15] Evelyn Stefansson Nef, "The Private Life of Vilhjalmur Stefansson," in *Terrestrial Science*, 25.
[16] Nef, "Private Life," 34.

who might be helpful to them."[17] The staff also undertook research for larger interests, such as Pan-American Airways, which made Stefansson their Adviser on Northern Conditions in 1933.

In 1935, the Stefansson Library entered into the first of several collaborations with various branches of the United States Armed Forces.[18] The Army required the composition of a comprehensive *Arctic Manual* for the instruction of soldiers living and working in that region. Having completed this task, the Library staff then created four exhaustive guides to conditions in Alaska, arctic Canada, Greenland, and arctic Siberia, each of which was between 1,200-2,200 typed pages in length. During the Second World War, the Library compiled three volumes of sailing directions—for East Greenland and Iceland, Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, and Northern Canada—and translated similar Russian material at the order of the Office of the Hydrographer of the Navy. The Office of the Coordinator of Information (OCI) also engaged the Library to answer ad-hoc requests about geographical areas above 60°N and to yield the results of their research for other organizations.[19] The result of the Library's decade-long service to the American government was the most complete collation of basic, current information about the Arctic in existence. This, in turn, was only a fraction of the information compiled by the OCI's Research and Analysis Section. Geographers there had generated over a million index cards' worth of information drawn from primary sources by the end of the war. Never before had researchers been enrolled in such systematic gathering and interpretation of knowledge, especially knowledge applied immediately to military and strategic directives.[20]

In July 1945, the scientist and administrator Vannevar Bush submitted his famous report, *Science: The Endless Frontier*, to President Harry S. Truman. It provided both rationale for and spur to a continuation of the relationship between the American government—in practice, the military—and researchers in the physical and social sciences. Many scholars have noted since that Canadian and American wartime and postwar scientific research in the North

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[17] Evelyn Stefansson, "A Short Account of the Stefansson Collection," *Polar Notes,* no. 1 (1959): 10.

[18] This collaboration seems to have been the result of a lobbying campaign waged by Carl Lomen, a powerful Alaskan businessman, that encouraged the allocation of funds toward the government's assembly of accurate information about the North American Arctic. According to Evelyn Stefansson, legislation was passed in the early 1930s that gave the Office of the President of the United States funds and authority for purchasing Arctic information, and from these funds came the money for Stefansson's series of contracts. See ibid. Stefansson was also apparently mistrusted by some governmental officials over his "entrepreneurial wartime consulting." See Fae L. Korsmo, "Glaciology, the Arctic, and the US Military, 1945-58," in *New Spaces of Exploration: Geographies of Discovery in the Twentieth Century*, eds. James R. Ryan and Simon Naylor (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 134.

[19] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Discovery: The Autobiography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 315-16; Stefansson, "Encyclopedia Arctica," unpublished MS, c1949, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

[20] Trevor J. Barnes and Matthew Farish, "Between Regions: Science, Militarism, and American Geography from World War to Cold War," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96 (2006): 813-14.

American Arctic was undertaken in tandem with military concerns and directed toward the elucidation of information useful to strategic and geopolitical planning. Contemporary military and scientific discourses constructed Arctic space in ways that shaped the intellectual environment into which the Encyclopedia was born. The Arctic was overwhelmingly seen as an unknown and hostile region in which multidisciplinary research was required to order and to control the environment for its optimal use and development. Mid-twentieth-century attempts to modernize the Arctic using new techniques and technologies of surveillance and organization have received much scholarly attention. There has been far less discussion of the ways in which *older* techniques, such as the circulation of information through correspondence and the recognition of non-academic expertise, and *older* technologies, such as encyclopedias, were deployed toward similar ends. As Fae Korsmo notes, "The unknowns were so many, the experts so few, there seemed to be vast amounts of room for different styles of conducting science, from gathering basic descriptive information to testing equipment."[21] The following discussion will elucidate the mobilization of these older, exploratory techniques and technologies in the creation of one postwar military project, the *Encyclopedia Arctica*.

The rise of the *Encyclopedia Arctica*

The *Encyclopedia* was an early postwar love-child of the Office of Naval Research's (ONR) desire to increase and diffuse knowledge of the Arctic and the willingness of the Stefansson Library to act as the base for the project's production. The former body, founded in August 1946, was initially intended to coordinate the Navy's research programs, particularly those that involved civilian scientists in the development of new weapons. Instead, it became the main sponsor of American scientific research until the National Science Foundation appeared in 1950. It guided the development of academic science by identifying those individuals and institutions worthy of funding, building a bureaucratic infrastructure for the distribution of grants, and advocating the need for a permanent federal budget for basic science. The Office's program officers, who were active scientists themselves, dispensed the majority of ONR funding to general scientific investigations that, in their view, filled gaps in existing knowledge.[22] In ONR's inaugural year, Stefansson and Dr. Moses Chaim Shelesnyak, the head of the ONR's Human Ecology Branch,

[21] Fae L. Korsmo, "The Early Cold War and U.S. Arctic Research," in *Extremes: Oceanography's Adventures at the Poles*, eds. Keith R. Benson and Helen M. Rozwadowski (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 2007), 190-91.
[22] Harvey M. Sapolsky, *Science and the Navy: The History of the Office of Naval Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 9, 38, 43-44, 96.

began to discuss the kind of initiatives needed to further arctic research. Three ideas emerged: the compilation of an international roster of arctic and subarctic specialists, a bibliography of publications dealing with those regions, and an encyclopedia of the Arctic. The fledgling Arctic Institute of North America took responsibility for the first two, and Stefansson and his library agreed to carry out the third.[23]

Stefansson was appointed the editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia Arctica*, and his chief assistant, Olive Wilcox, became its managing editor. As its template, the *Arctica* used such major modern encyclopedias as *Americana* or *Britannica*. It was to consist of between four and a half and six million words, of which Stefansson and the library staff would write approximately half. A further five to ten percent would be contracted out to freelance writers, and specialists in various fields would contribute the remainder. Geographically speaking, the *Encyclopedia's* remit was the circumpolar Arctic "shading off into the Subarctic," as Stefansson frequently and picturesquely described it.[24] Its intellectual scope was all-encompassing within its geographical one, but was divided generally into five categories: historical and modern biographies, in which would be included accounts of expeditions; geographical articles that covered all natural and man-made features of the arctic environment; articles about the history and involvement of scientific societies in the Arctic; similar articles about government departments; and special articles, which were primarily treatises from various disciplinary perspectives within the physical, natural, and social sciences.[25] Three years and $150,000 was allotted for its completion. At least fifty multilith copies would be printed, but the choice between a government or academic publisher was deferred to the future.[26]

What of its purpose? Twentieth-century encyclopedias are generally regarded as storehouses of information. Encyclopedias over the ages have also served as abridgements of burgeoning libraries, sanctuaries in case of apocalyptic disaster, home education courses, shrines to national greatness, mirrors of the world, or sites of pleasurable mental wandering, to

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[23] Stefansson, *Discovery*, 359-360; Stefansson to John Field, 15 May 1951, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC. Cronenwett notes that Stefansson also submitted a proposal, perhaps only preliminary, for a "Stefansson Scientific Institute for Polar Exploration" to ONR's predecessor, the Office of Research and Inventions, in early 1946. The formal proposal for the *Encyclopedia* was not submitted until July of that year. Cronenwett, "Arctica," 41-42.

[24] In the North American case, the boundary of the Subarctic retreated southward as the project progressed. Cf. Stefansson to Herman Friis, 14 August 1947, Box 28 and Stefansson to Philip Chester, 26 February 1948, Box 29; both MSS 96, RSC. The editors seemed content to let external contributors adjudicate regional boundaries as the latter saw fit.

[25] Stefansson, "Progress Report on Contract N6ONR-265," unpublished memorandum, 26 May 1947, Box 29, MSS 96, RSC.

[26] Cronenwett, "Arctica," 42.

name but a few of their roles.[27] Prefatory remarks often signal editorial intentions, but no such words were ever written for the deserted *Arctica*. However, the correspondence and manuscript papers relating to the project indicate that Stefansson held one aim most dear. His post-exploratory career had been devoted to educating the public about the "true" Arctic; the *Encyclopedia* would be his final, ultimate effort. The short article announcing the work's inception notes that "its goal, which we do not expect to approach closely, is to answer every question that any intelligent and reasonable person may want to ask concerning the region geographically covered."[28] Shelesnyak and other persons at the ONR may have shared this aspiration, and may also have endowed it with patriotic purpose. The argument went thus: since few Americans, of the military or otherwise, knew much about the Arctic, and since, in a democratic society, the voters hold the ultimate governing power, an encyclopedia—knowledge incarnate in trustworthy form—was needed to educate all citizens, from the lowest layperson to the President himself, for the general improvement of the United States.[29] The corollary of this wish was the *Encyclopedia*'s ability to hold such knowledge in trust for future American generations.[30]

Elsewhere, Stefansson and his editors conjured visions of an encyclopedia intended as the handmaiden of science. In the draft of an article written for a Navy publication, Stefansson stated that the project would analyse and synthesize diffuse historical data to create a systematic body of information about the Arctic for the use of postwar scientific expeditions. This region, "so important in present-day history," he argued, "will become better understood and more significant in the realm of politics, economics, and technology."[31] Dr. Max Dunbar's preface to the manuscript Zoology volume also notes the need for synthesis in aid of scientific inquiry. Many of that volume's papers were to be original review articles of existing literature,

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[27] Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 77-78, 83-86; Diderot, "Encyclopedia," 290; Brian Dolan, "Encyclopedic Visions," *Minerva* 43 (2005): 93; Collison, *Encyclopaedias*, 52; Peter France, "The Encyclopedia as Organism," *European Legacy* 3, no. 3 (1998): 68.

[28] Stefansson, "Encyclopedia Arctica," *Arctic* 1 (1948): 44.

[29] Stefansson to the Arctic Institute of North America, "Publication of Encyclopedia Arctica Material," 25 September 1953; Stefansson, "Encyclopedia Arctica and the Arctic Institute," unpublished memorandum, 15 December 1953; Stefansson, "Problem of 'Encyclopedia Arctica,'" unpublished memorandum, 21 March 1955; Stefansson to Archibald Day, 10 October 1957; all Box 32, MSS 96, RSC. As Stefansson told and retold this story in the years after the *Encyclopedia*'s failure, it became progressively more grandiose in scope. Therefore, it should not be regarded as a true reflection of opinion in early 1946, or indeed, the opinion of anyone but its author. Its dubious representation of historical events does not render its substance unworthy of note, particularly in light of the lack of usual encyclopedic indicators of intentionality.

[30] Stefansson, untitled speech (delivered at an Office of Naval Research colloquium), 19 February 1948, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

[31] Stefansson, "Encyclopedia Arctica."

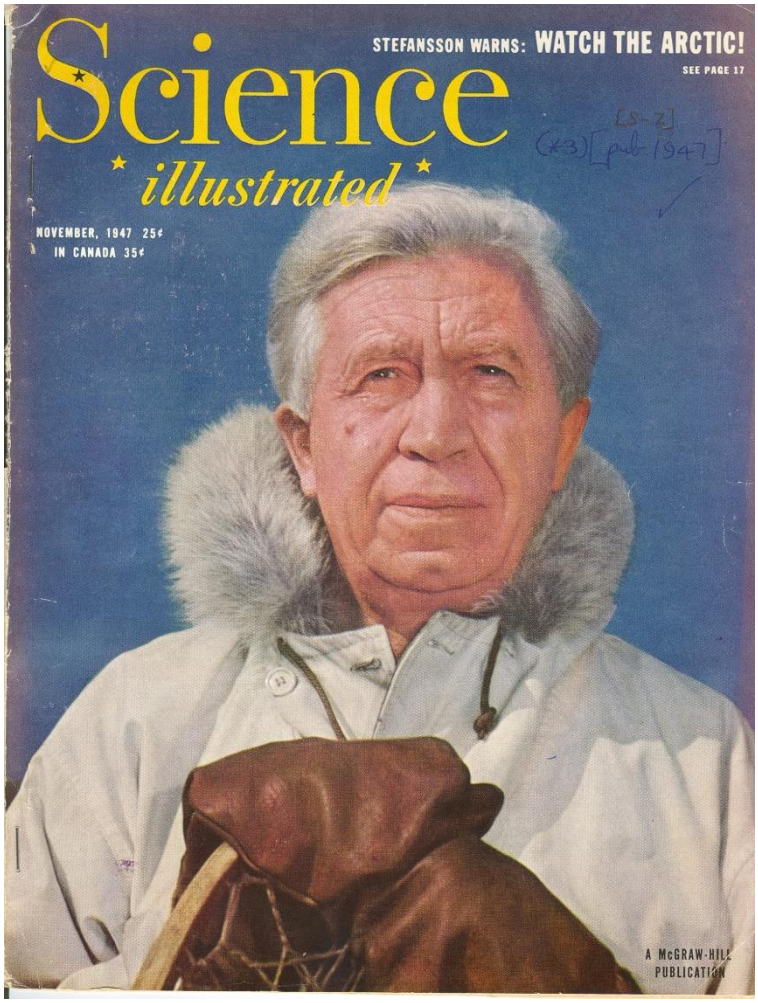

Figure 5.1. This issue of *Science Illustrated* hit the stands within the first year of the *Encyclopedia*'s production. Here, Stefansson continues to draw upon the visual language of northern exploration, despite both his long-standing retirement from fieldwork and the hot summer conditions that attended the photography session.

crowned with extensive bibliographies. Hence Dunbar's envisaged "specialized body of readers" might overlap only incidentally with Stefansson's everyman.[32] The *Encyclopedia* seems to have been constructed variously in addresses to different political and scientific audiences. With the aims of general enlightenment, scientific springboarding, and endowment to future generations in mind, Stefansson embarked upon his first editorial task, that of enlisting expert contribution.

[32] Max Dunbar, "Foreword" to volumes 3-4, c1951, Box 7, MSS 96, RSC. The content of these documents, both of which were written late in the *Encyclopedia*'s life, may also reflect the need to assuage ONR's increasing hesitance about funding projects that benefited the civilian economy and the "soft" sciences. See the discussion below, and also Sapolsky, *Science*, 60-64.

Experts and expertise

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s third edition (1788-97) marked the entrance of expert contribution to English-language encyclopedias. The fourth edition (1801-09) and its descendants continued this practice for reasons of intellectual prestige and commercial marketability. As the first generation of authorities heightened the work's good name, it became easier to attract the foremost ones of the next.[33] Novice encyclopedias have no such fund of credit; much depends on the editor and his gifts. Moreover, each encyclopedic venture—indeed, each encyclopedic edition, in *Britannica*'s case—develops different approaches to the editor-contributor relationship.[34] Examining the ways and means by which Stefansson secured "expert" assistance and constructed "expert" authority is important to an accurate understanding of the *Arctica*. Indeed, his editorship opened with a gamble. Considering that commercial publishers of encyclopedias overlooked a crucial money-saving factor in "man's fundamental desire for the increase and diffusion of knowledge," he had budgeted 20-40% less money than would be required to secure the assistance of outside writers.[35] His decision was predicated in part on the existence of many people, known to him through his networks of sociability and correspondence, who were able to produce knowledge about arctic conditions. In many cases, these people were already writing on such topics, for publication and for private use. It was simply a matter of convincing them to shift into an encyclopedic style of composition.

Stefansson's method mirrored his life in collapsing distinctions between the personal and the professional. He worked long hours seven days a week for the first twenty years of his post-arctic life, and relaxed this schedule only marginally after marrying in 1941. "Work is play when one enjoys it," he told Shelesnyak in 1949. "It has been through life my great good fortune that I have always enjoyed what I had to do, and never more than now."[36] Moreover, Stefansson's personal qualities often worked to the *Encyclopedia*'s benefit. He exuded great warmth to everyone he met, no matter their station in society. This, combined with his unfailing generosity concerning his time, money, and such tangibles as food and books, gained him

[33] The word "expert" was not used as a noun until the mid-nineteenth century. Earlier persons may have been expert in something, but they were not "experts," per se. Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, 248.
[34] Herman Kogan, *The Great EB: The Story of the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, chapter 10; Yeo, "Reading Encyclopedias," 45-47; Collison, *Encyclopaedias*, 149.
[35] Stefansson, *Discovery*, 360; Stefansson to Raymond Arthur Davies, 21 May 1947, File 2, Volume 8, Richard Sterling Finnie fonds, MG31 C6, Library and Archives Canada.
[36] Stefansson to Shelesnyak, 28 June 1949, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

innumerable friends the world over. It has been said that his two greatest joys were friendship and knowledge of the Arctic.[37] Both were vital components to the *Encyclopedia*'s success, especially in the matter of securing compositional participation at governmental, professional, and individual levels.

Drawing upon his hypothesis about the desire for public education at all levels of American society, Stefansson reasoned that institutions such as scientific societies and government departments that were already beholden to the public would be willing to contribute articles on their history and workings free of charge.[38] While the representatives of such bodies sometimes viewed this invitation as an opportunity to broadcast a positive image of their work to the public, they were more likely to be chary of devoting any unpaid time or effort to an unknown quantity.[39] Stefansson, aware of these mixed reactions, planned and executed a series of meetings with officials in Ottawa and Washington early in the *Encyclopedia*'s development, and later repeated this performance in other governmental hubs. Sometimes he had the advantage of prior relationships with the officials he met; at other times he depended upon his charisma and rhetorical skills, best unleashed in person, to sway decisions in the *Encyclopedia*'s favour. Prosaically, he noted that the value of the free material obtained would more than compensate for the expense of his travel to these engagements.[40]

These meetings, abutted by considerable negotiation through correspondence thereafter, achieved excellent results. Institutions such as the American Geographical Society, the National Geographical Society, the Oxford and Cambridge exploration clubs, and the Scott Polar Research Institute contributed summaries of their Arctic accomplishments. Many pertinent American and Canadian government departments also agreed to participate in the *Encyclopedia*. Examples of the latter included the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Department of National Health and Welfare, the Department of Mines and Resources, and the

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[37] Evelyn Stefansson, "Postlude," in Stefansson, *Discovery*, 400; Nef, "Private Life," 24; G. Edgar Folk, Jr., "Preface," in *Terrestrial Science*, 3.

[38] Michael Bravo and Sverker Sörlin confirm similar productions of non-professional histories of arctic exploration and research elsewhere in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and note that these subjects were "for a long time part of public memory and national myth-making rather than of professional historiography...." See Bravo and Sörlin, "Narrative and Practice—An Introduction," in *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*, eds. Michael Bravo and Sverker Sörlin (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 2002), 7.

[39] For example, Commander Palmer W. ("Bill") Roberts, Director of the Plans Division of the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks and one of the *Encyclopedia*'s editorial advisers, told Stefansson that American government departments would cooperate more readily if they received an "official" request for contributions directly from ONR, and not the project's editor-in-chief. Stefansson to Shelesnyak, 27 September 1948, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

[40] Stefansson to Shelesnyak, "Personal," 8 April 1948, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

Royal Canadian Air Force.[41] Stefansson partly attributed the *Encyclopedia*'s later difficulties in obtaining material on the Soviet Arctic to his inability to visit Moscow personally in the early stages of *Encyclopedia* operations. Considered inadvisable at first, the excursion was positively forbidden later as diplomatic relations between the two countries worsened.[42]

Eminent arctic scientists served as editorial advisers on their general subjects. These included Dr. Nicholas Polunin in botany, Dr. Max Dunbar in zoology, Commander David Nutt of the U.S. Navy in marine transportation, Dr. Henry Collins Jr. in anthropology and archaeology, Dr. Harald V. Sverdrup in oceanography and, finally, Shelesnyak, after he had left his ONR position in late 1949, in human ecology.[43] They were paid $400 each to undertake such tasks as dividing up their subject matter into discrete articles, locating, negotiating, and corresponding with suitable authors, commenting on draft manuscripts of articles, and participating in conferences with the editor-in-chief and the managing editor.[44]

From December 1946 onward, Stefansson began to contact his friends. He often slipped mention of the *Encyclopedia* into the flow of their running correspondence, recommending articles that made full use of their talents, soliciting their suggestions as to others they might write, and asking for advice on who might write others still. Whenever possible, he made arrangements to meet potential contributors, both personally known and unknown, while travelling on the lecturing circuit. He believed that both his gratitude for their services and his

[41] Given the oft-recorded animosity toward Stefansson that persisted among postwar Canadian civil servants, cooperation in Canadian quarters may have been secured more out of the diplomatic desire to assist the American government than through any warmth felt toward the *Encyclopedia*'s editor-in-chief.
[42] Stefansson to Shelesnyak, 11 March 1949, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.
[43] Polunin (1909-97) was an expert on the plant geography of the circumpolar Arctic, and, from 1947, Chair of Botany at McGill University in Montreal. He devoted most of his later career to raising international awareness about the detrimental effects of human activity on the environment through various journals, conferences, and foundations. Dunbar (1914-95) was a zoologist and oceanographer who worked at McGill's Department of Zoology during this era. His main research contributions were in the areas of polar marine ecosystems, marine climatic change, and marine biogeography in northern seas. Nutt (1919-2008) served as an active naval officer during World War II, after which time he became attached to Dartmouth College's Geography Department. He led the team that pioneered ice drilling techniques in Greenland in the 1950s; their study of the composition of ancient air in Greenland's ice led to the modern study of climate change in the polar regions. Collins (1899-1987) was a veteran arctic anthropologist and senior ethnologist with the Bureau of American Ethnology. He devoted much physical and intellectual energy to discerning the origins and development of historical Inuit cultures across northern North America. Sverdrup (1888-1957), a renowned Norwegian meteorologist and oceanographer, developed the first accurate description of global ocean circulation. He directed scientific programs for both arctic and antarctic expeditions throughout his life. He served as head of the Scripps Institute of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego from 1936-48 and then as head of the Norwegian Polar Institute. In addition to his roles mentioned above, Shelesnyak (1909-94) conducted physiological research on human fertility and conception at both American and Israeli institutions. He also served as the director of the interdisciplinary communications program at the Smithsonian from 1968-77. With the exception of Sverdrup, all of these men were also actively involved in the Arctic Institute of North America.
[44] Wilcox to Max Plisner, 7 December 1949, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

expectations for their contributions were best communicated in person. Moreover, he was always receptive to the possibility of attracting new contributors. Evelyn Stefansson's daily notes from their West Coast lecture tour in late 1947 demonstrate that play could, and did, transform into work in an instant. At an after-dinner soirée in Eugene, Oregon, the entry of certain friends prompted immediate action: "Stef and I enlisted Lulu and Ralph [Fairbanks] to help on the Encyclopedia and we went into a huddle, ignoring the party while Lulu dictated as fast as I could write the names and addresses of various people who could write Encyclopedia articles. I filled pages of my notebook...."[45] Subject editors assisted by nominating individuals unknown to Stefansson that hailed from the scientific, military, industrial, and business communities of the circumpolar countries. Among their number were active and retired professors, scientists, engineers, other kinds of fieldworkers, historians, and professional writers.[46]

Reflecting on the project after its cancellation, Stefansson took satisfaction in the immense and enthusiastic work of its contributors. They had sold their work to the *Encyclopedia* as long as funding held out, and then, in many cases, had kept writing gratis, until their contributions were as lengthy and as numerous as they (and the editors) desired. One gentleman had been paid for 3,000 words at the standard expert rate of 2 cents per word, yet had actually contributed 70,000.[47] Their motivation may have arisen for several reasons besides friendship with Stefansson. An "authoritative compendium of arctic information" would enable better study of the region about which they had worked to gain expertise.[48] Some may have relished the challenges inherent in writing for this medium: the perfect condensation of the subject, the brief explanation of controversies, and, most painful of all, the necessity of eschewing much of interest and relevance.[49] There was also the honour of the task and the personal legacy it would entail, in some cases twice over, when an author's actions had earned him an additional berth in the *Encyclopedia*'s biographical section. But one must finally credit the general editorial policy, which accorded a substantial amount of control to individual contributors. The *Encyclopedia* therefore served as a venue in which individuals from a variety of occupations and backgrounds were able to construct or reinscribe personal identities as modern arctic experts. This level of individual freedom in the production of arctic authority

[45] Evelyn Stefansson, "E.A. Notes," unpublished diary entry, 21 November 1947, Box 28, MSS 96, RSC.
[46] Stefansson, "Reports to the Friends of Encyclopedia Arctica," unpublished MS, 1 April 1952, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC.
[47] "Friends of Encyclopedia Arctica."
[48] "Encyclopedia Arctica."
[49] Collison, *Encyclopaedias*, 227.

significantly diverged from other kinds of arctic knowledge production in this period, as will be discussed shortly.

This policy also contravened common encyclopedic practice. It was usual for editors to order and prioritize subjects centrally, and then to outline exactly what was desired in an article to its potential author.[50] "We started off on the other tack," Stefansson admitted in 1949. "We wanted to have good authors, in most cases men who knew more than anybody else on the particular subject, and we wanted them to emphasize what they thought was important."[51] Stefansson and Wilcox consistently gave broad powers of discrimination to their contributors. One was instructed to make an article "as long as you would make it if you were an editor of the *Encyclopedia*."[52] The lenient geographical boundaries of the Arctic and Subarctic have already been noted. Style as well as content was left to the discretion of the individual expert. Consequently, the special articles ranged in tone from scholarly to personally reminiscent to popular, with many containing good dollops of each variant. Wilcox thought "the diversity of style reflecting the personality of the authors is better ... than too great a sameness would be."[53] Therefore, no editorial attempt at homogenization was made.

In adopting this attitude, the editors may have been influenced by the scarcity of arctic expertise generally in this era. In many cases, only one person had the requisite knowledge to write a certain article, and such unusual freedom of composition may have increased the offer's appeal. Nonetheless, some writers remained resistant, and others proved false hopes. With the help of outside advice, Stefansson had identified the premier expert on a certain polar mammal to write the attendant article. The man had produced a result so poor that even those who had recommended him agreed that his manuscript was unusable.[54] Other eminent scholars proved disappointing in the scribal realm. Stefansson noted that "knowledge doesn't always carry with

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[50] Kogan, *Great EB*, 287; Stefansson, "Experience of ESS – Details Regarding Editorial Procedure," unpublished memorandum, 14 March 1949, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

[51] Stefansson to Shelesnyak, 27 April 1949, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

[52] Stefansson to LeBourdais, 17 March 1947, Box 29, MSS 96, RSC. This policy soon became troublesome. The *Encyclopedia* frequently ran short of money to pay for contracted articles, in part because contributors would submit manuscripts that far exceeded the word limit (and therefore budget) agreed upon for their subject. Under the new policy, payment was made only for the length specified in the contract. However, extra words would be "gratefully accepted" if the contributor found it easier to write at length. Wilcox to Hobbs, 18 October 1948, Box 29, MSS 96, RSC.

[53] Wilcox to LeBourdais, 8 August 1947, Box 29, MSS 96, RSC.

[54] The correspondence related to this occurrence is detailed in Wilcox to A.L. Rand, 22 June 1948; Rand to Wilcox, 7 July 1948; Stefansson to Rand, 2 August 1948; Stefansson to Rand, 12 November 1948; Rand to Stefansson, 30 November 1948; all Box 30, MSS 96, RSC. See also Stefansson, "Memorandum for Encyclopedia Arctica Conversations April 27th 1949," unpublished memorandum, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.

it ability to organize the material and to write clearly."[55] In view of their limited options, the editors had to demonstrate patience when deadlines were missed. To obtain the precious manuscript, they could urge, cajole, but never threaten, in view of the author's indispensability to the *Encyclopedia*'s success.[56]

Yet the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the *Encyclopedia Arctica*'s broad construction of expertise was grounded in the editor-in-chief's preference and experience. Stefansson's career had been one long example of the non-institutional acquisition of arctic knowledge. However, with the increasing professionalization of the social, natural, and physical sciences in the early twentieth century, this occupational model was becoming rarer and rarer. The new field of northern studies that began to emerge after the war was predicated upon consciously academic and professional modes of knowledge creation and dissemination. The possession of a postgraduate degree was increasingly a requirement of participation, and the results of research were more often published in peer-reviewed journals.[57] Stefansson himself had been criticized by academic scholars who felt that his professional training had been insufficient to enable him to produce authoritative knowledge about the Arctic.[58]

While Stefansson elicited the participation of academic scholars in the encyclopedia, he did not anchor the ability to write for the *Encyclopedia* to a specific set of credentials. Arguably, his view of expertise can be characterized as more exploratory than scientific, in that it recognized many different kinds of first-hand experiences and second-hand study as potentially capable of producing authoritative knowledge about the Arctic. This is not to say that Stefansson was undiscerning about the kinds of information he accepted as fit for publication. Rather, the verification of knowledge that lacked explicitly academic approbation was carried out primarily through the conduits of established relationships of trust, and was validated, in addition, with reference to personal observation and study as well as communal judgment. These methods, which openly yoked together the knowledge of people with the knowledge of

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[55] "Encyclopedia Arctica Conversations."

[56] Stefansson, "Semiannual Progress Report, January 1 to June 30, 1950, *Encyclopedia Arctica*, Contract N6onr-265, Task Order 1, NR 162-218," unpublished report, 5 July 1950, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

[57] See, for example, Matthew Evenden, "Harold Innis, the Arctic Survey, and the Politics of Social Science during the Second World War," *Canadian Historical Review* 79 (March 1998): 36-67; Stephen Bocking, "A Disciplined Geography: Aviation, Science, and the Cold War in Northern Canada, 1945-1960," *Technology and Culture* 50 (April 2009): 265-90.

[58] Harold Innis did not consider that Stefansson had proper training in historical research, and disliked his "persuasive dogmatism and cocksure ingenuity." Quoted in Janice Cavell, "The True Northwest Passage: Explorers in Anglo-Canadian Nationalist Narratives," *Northern Review* 32 (2010): 22; see also Evenden, "Arctic Survey," 40-41. For postwar critiques of Stefansson's academic ability and currency, see Richard Diubaldo, *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 210; Michael Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn: A Life of Exploration* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2004), 101-2.

things, can be seen to derive from older models of the investigation and circulation of natural historical knowledge common to earlier eras.

The need for authentication of non-scientific knowledge occurred continually at the instigation of Stefansson, Wilcox, and their expert contributors throughout the life of the *Encyclopedia*. The need for this regular sequence of actions also demonstrates the greater effort necessary in the construction of this *Encyclopedia* than most. Southern North Americans' knowledge of the Arctic was thought to be very incomplete in the postwar period; this belief, combined with Stefansson's utilization of a broad range of contributorial talent, often required the verification of authority through a series of intermediate steps. Here, the processes of creation and verification of fact can be studied quite productively. In publications emerging from more established intellectual traditions, these actions would be crumpled together, elided, or eclipsed because of the existence of prior structures that embodied and allowed the quick establishment of veracity. In this encyclopedia, they occur at the perfect speed for close analysis, attended by copious annotation and processual reflexivity.

As attested over and over again in their correspondence and office memoranda, both editors and experts were acutely aware of the fragility of their information, the need to subject it to questioning, the ways in which this could legitimately be done, and the overwhelming importance of determining the truth for the sake of accurate records. Of all the fields with which the *Encyclopedia* was concerned, obtaining accurate information on persons proved most difficult. By examining how biographical articles were written, one can view this transformation of first, second, and even third-hand information into fact in close detail. Moreover, the *Encyclopedia*'s coupling of exploration and biography is of especial interest, given this dissertation's inquiry into the production of individual identities through the practices of exploration.

Personality, propinquity, propriety

Capping a list of questions about biographical matters, Richard Finnie, the *Encyclopedia*'s first Canadian editor, observed that "obviously, some standards have got to be set up."[59] As Canadian editors, Finnie, with his wife Alyce, and, after their departure, the professional writer Donat M. LeBourdais, wrote or arranged for the writing of most of the biographies of men who had endeavoured in the Canadian Arctic since the region's enclosure within Canadian

[59] Finnie to Stefansson, 17 February 1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

jurisdiction.[60] Drawing upon the rich extant correspondence, as well as the many biographical manuscripts, Canadian and otherwise, one can examine who qualified for inclusion, how their lives were researched, and how this research was transformed into a coherent narrative.

An answer to Finnie's, and, by extension, this discussion's challenge is found in the Stefansson Library memorandum tellingly titled "Biographical Sketches of Arctic Administrators, Explorers, Scientists, Historians, and Others." Exploration is presented as a sufficient but not necessary condition for inclusion. Indeed, the *Encyclopedia*'s editors hoped to garner notices of men (and some women) of every nationality, including aboriginal peoples, who had been important in relation to the North. Their northern accomplishments were to be stressed, but the rest of their careers, along with vital statistics, were to be given in brief. Accounts of arctic expeditions were to be recorded in full in the biographical entry of their leader, and only cursorily mentioned in those of other expedition members. Important texts were to receive summary in their authors' entries. The length of a biography was set in proportion to its subject's greatness. Luminaries as Peary and Nansen would receive 10,000-15,000 words; many others would be allotted 1,000-5,000; those of least renown were given 100-200.[61] Geographical factors also had some bearing; in keeping with the *Encyclopedia*'s desire to "shade off" into the Subarctic, exploits there were accorded less importance.[62] Temporally, subject matter was limited only by the extent of recorded history, and many biographies were projected for ancient and medieval personalities who had influenced conceptions of the North in their times.

At Stefansson's request, the Canadian editors drew up lists of names that were then discussed with the editor-in-chief and managing editor. Persons still living were to contribute their own biographical notes or summary for free. There is no record of Stefansson rejecting either a living or dead person's name outright. Aside from again denoting the trust that the

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[60] Alyce Finnie wrote 34 biographical entries and Richard Finnie wrote 24 for a combined total of 58. LeBourdais wrote 36, but he was not the second most prolific contributor to this section. That honour fell to the Reverend Howard R. Rokeby-Thomas, then an Anglican priest at Port Stanley, Ontario. He wrote biographies of all the Church of England's arctic missionaries that had served in Canada: 52 in total. Out of some 1,000 biographical entries, those of Canadians total 220. This number aligns roughly with Wilcox's allotment of one-quarter of the 1947 budget for outside contributions on all Canadian subjects. Wilcox to Finnie, 28 March 1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

[61] The length of the Canadian biographies was contested in several ways. While the Finnies kept their contributions relatively concise, LeBourdais successfully argued for the raising of word limits. Lacking final editorial intervention, the Canadian contributions are therefore uneven in their adherence to the twin principles that importance permits length and length bespeaks importance. Finnie also argued that certain obscure characters required greater explanation for the reader to appreciate their worth, whereas the titles of some "big shots" would speak for themselves. Finnie to Wilcox, 5 September 1947, File 3, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

[62] Stefansson, "*Encyclopedia Arctica*: Biographical Sketches of Arctic Administrators, Explorers, Scientists, Historians, and Others," unpublished memorandum, c1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

editors placed in the opinions of contributors, this lack of dissension would seem to confirm the general hypothesis, evidence of which is replete in Stefansson's correspondence, that he wanted the *Encyclopedia* to be both as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.[63] Indeed, upon initial approach, some subjects doubted that their deeds merited such tribute. The Canadian historian Harold Innis thought his inclusion was "ridiculous."[64] The wildlife biologist Douglas Clarke was flattered, but named several other northerners that he felt more deserving of coverage.[65] The engineer T.A. Rickard outright refused at first. Only after Stefansson told him curtly, "And please, no more modesties," did he request a biography of a minor figure upon which to base his own.[66] Without knowing such personalities in detail, it is hard to say whether these demurrals were made for rhetorical reasons, to heighten the appearance of modesty in relation to one's achievements, or whether they arose out of genuine humility.

The criteria for inclusion were also inflected by twin considerations of what might be termed propinquity and distance. The same personal networks through which *Encyclopedia* contributors were recruited also "happened" to contain many of the work's biographical subjects.[67] An editor's judgment of a person's importance may have been tinted by the rose-coloured lenses of friendship, and sometimes yielded what seems, from a twenty-first-century perspective, an over-long biography. Moreover, since the *Encyclopedia* was attempting to take stock in a period of quickening activity in the Arctic, its writers were not always able to attain enough objectivity, through being mired in the present, to make good relative assessments.[68]

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[63] This tendency was occasionally taken to extremes. Stefansson once suggested that biographies should be written for the arctic scientist Edward Kindle's two eminent intellectual mentors David Starr Jordan and John Casper Branner. Neither of these men had anything to do with the Arctic. See Stefansson's comments on Alyce Finnie, "Kindle, Edward Martin," June 1947, Box 19, MSS 96, RSC.

[64] Innis to Finnie, 24 July 1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC. He added, "Then bring no end to my vanity."

[65] Clarke to Finnie, 4 July 1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

[66] Stefansson to Rickard, 24 May 1948; Stefansson to Rickard, 6 October 1948; Rickard to Stefansson, 13 October 1948; Stefansson to Rickard, 14 December 1948, all Box 30, MSS 96, RSC; Rickard to Stefansson, 30 September 1949, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC. Stefansson's irritation at Rickard's obstinacy boiled over in a letter to W. Kaye Lamb: "What if he is not a de Lesseps or a Goethals? – the Arctic has not as yet run to engineering projects comparable to the Suez and Panama Canals. Rickard is a distinguished engineer and has written some fine books. One of these, THROUGH THE YUKON AND ALASKA is strictly northern and others have a northern slant." 26 September 1949, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.

[67] Indeed, one might also view the *Encyclopedia*'s biographical volumes alternatively, as an Arctic *Who's Who*, or a census of recent northerners and northernists. This again reflects Stefansson's desire for universal inclusion. However, it also prompts questions as to the main beneficiaries of such work. LeBourdais commented, "Whether there will be enough persons interested in such details as to justify the space we are devoting to these biographies is a matter which I suppose you have already considered." LeBourdais to Stefansson, 18 January 1948, Box 30, MSS 96, RSC.

[68] Analogy can be drawn to the content of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s three-volume supplement to its eleventh edition (1922). In treating events from 1910-21, the "unhappy proximity" of World War I threw the editorial perspective out of balance. The volumes are filled with "blow-by-blow accounts of individual battles" and "step-by-step narratives of specific campaigns." Collison, *Encyclopaedias*, 151.

That the biographies of southern residents dominated this arctic encyclopedia gives a clue to its explicit situation in imperial networks of knowledge production. Finnie solicited and made his own suggestions as to northern residents—independent traders, trappers, and aboriginal people—who merited inclusion, but he left the project before he could compose most such biographies. LeBourdais's biographies mainly concerned geologists of the Canadian Survey and men of the mining industry. Even in Finnie's schema, natives were rendered of interest primarily through association with eminent historical explorers or history itself.[69] Such a view reflects the vast cultural as well as geographical space that lay between New York and Washington, where the encyclopedia was managed and produced, and the outposts of the North. The *Encyclopedia* inscribed the Arctic primarily as a place of imperial and transitory endeavour rather than as a homeland.

Biographical information was gained through written and experiential sources, and through direct and indirect testimony. Although there was no dictionary of Canadian biography at that time, Finnie drew some facts from the Canadian *Who's Who* and the Canadian Parliamentary Guide. LeBourdais used newspaper files and obituaries to obtain data on notable mining men, while others judged these sources as inaccurate.[70] Occasionally explorers gave personal details in their published travel accounts. More often, given that many prospective subjects were still alive, autobiographical information could be obtained directly, either in person, over the telephone, or by letter. This applied as much to notable northern residents as to explorers. Finnie arranged to have a passenger on the Hudson's Bay Company ship *Nascopie* interview "some of the outstanding Eskimos of the Eastern Arctic" when the vessel made its annual trip north in 1947.[71]

Those who had worked alongside subjects proved excellent secondary sources, particularly if their erstwhile experience had been long and varied. Regarding the biography of Captain Robert Bartlett, Stefansson speaks of the value of "the point of view of a man who had been with him on several voyages and who had also covered some of the territory under different auspices."[72] Biographies were co-authored when each author could contribute something of peculiar worth. That of Dr. John Rae was to be written by Professor R.N. Rudmose

[69] One apposite example from his list of projected biographies is "Pierre Drybones ... barren land Indian who worked with Pike + gave J.W. Tyrrell a map of the Thelon, and lived until the 1930's as a link with the past." "A few names," n.d., File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.
[70] For example: "The factual data [I enclose] is much more correct that [sic] a lot of the newspaper morgue material, which is full of errors." R.A. Logan to Finnie, 30 July 1947, File 3, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.
[71] Finnie to Wilcox, 3 July 1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.
[72] Stefansson to Hobbs, 9 September 1947, Box 28, MSS 96, RSC.

Brown, a Scottish explorer and geographer who had known Rae when very young and had admired him since, and Stefansson, who had been over the country of Rae's explorations using similar travel and subsistence methods.[73]

The editors recognized that biographies would vary not only with the author's writing style, but also with the subject's career and personality.[74] Living subjects treated themselves in diverse ways. While a few dwelt lovingly and at length on their accomplishments, others scarcely thought them worth mentioning. The Reverend Harold Webster, an Anglican missionary who had spent decades at Coppermine, sent Finnie succinct notes, including the laconic statement "Lost in Arctic 1931 for five days and narrowly escaped death." From his own knowledge, Finnie expanded this sentence into several hundred words that both examined the conditions of the incident without sensationalization and gave credit to the missionary's life-saving qualities.[75] Indeed, Finnie's self-stated key strength as a writer and editor of biographies was his personal acquaintance with nearly everyone active in the Canadian Subarctic and Arctic in his generation and the two preceding ones.[76] This intimate knowledge, he felt, gave him a kind of expertise that rendered him able to set a person's life and work in context, assess it accordingly, and represent it in a balanced yet appreciative manner.

However, these practices did not exclude a certain amount of self-preservation, literally speaking. Subtly, Finnie and his wife ensured that he received sufficient recognition for his arctic deeds, such as his participation in the first flight over the Magnetic North Pole and his contribution to the fledgling photographic and cinematic industries in the Arctic.[77] His family also enjoyed detailed treatment. Biographical notice was given to Finnie's maternal grandfather, Richard Roediger, as the first newspaper publisher in Dawson. Finnie's biography of his father, O.S. Finnie, was moderately revisionist, in that the elder Finnie was credited for initiatives that

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[73] Stefansson to Rudmose Brown, 10 September 1947, Box 29, MSS 96, RSC.
[74] Wilcox to Finnie, 29 April 1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.
[75] Webster to Finnie, 23 September 1947, File 3, Volume 8; Richard Finnie, "Webster, Rev. Canon J. Harold," File 10, Volume 6; both MG31 C6, LAC.
[76] Finnie to Stefansson, 17 February 1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.
[77] The subsuming of Alyce Finnie's writerly identity within that of her husband is common among women's participation in early twentieth-century encyclopedias. Gillian Thomas asserts that "typically, such collaborations resulted in the female half of the partnership being seen as 'helping learning' rather than being engaged in scholarly activity in her own right." *A Position to Command Respect: Women and the Eleventh* Britannica (London: Scarecrow, 1992), 30. Alyce receives a sentence's worth of mention in her husband's biographical entry. Note of her education at the Sorbonne is made, and then somewhat undermined by her characterization as Richard's "assistant." See Richard Finnie's autobiographical entry, File 13, Volume 6, MG31 C6, LAC, and also the discussion below.

his administrative betters had often claimed as their own.[78] In contrast to the reflexive modern equation of objectivity with the creation of superior knowledge, the editors viewed authorial subjectivity as a boon to the *Encyclopedia*. Contributors could, and did, seize such an opportunity for personal memorialization.

The Canadian biographies were written generally to inform and to collect scattered facts into one repository for safe-keeping, as did most other articles in the *Encyclopedia*. Yet Stefansson wanted the biographies, when necessary, to serve as vehicles for the reassessment of personal legacies:

> They must not be straight attacks or debunking; neither must they be eulogies or milk-and-water presentations that avoid distressing issues. Hitherto most published biographies of explorers have been written on what I call the lawn tennis principle—that one sportsman must not say anything about another unless it be complimentary. When a war is in the past the commanders, the seconds-in-command, and the rest of the generals, admirals and other officers try their best to analyze the successes and failures of campaigns and persons, letting the chips fall where they may. We in the exploring game should, I think, take leaves from such books. This is the more beyond question in the case of men ... remote in time ... ; their generation and two or three others are off the stage, so that no one is now likely to get emotionally wrought up over a biographer's attempted just appraisal which does not turn out to be flattering to everybody concerned.[79]

Here, Stefansson explicitly urged an objective perspective in the writing of historical biography. Such a conviction arose from his personal encounters with historical revisionism. In his first address to the Royal Geographical Society in 1913, he had praised John Rae, whose use of aboriginal techniques was still regarded with disdain among the old guard of British polar explorers. Stefansson never forgot his frosty reception there, although his reception of a Society medal in 1920 must have soothed the old wound somewhat.[80] George Douglas agreed that revised judgments of certain historical characters were overdue, and carried out two such in his biographies of the British explorers Dr. Richard King and Sir Edward Belcher. In his view, both men had received less than due acknowledgement for their arctic achievements, particularly their roles in the mid-nineteenth-century search for John Franklin, his officers, and his crew. Douglas believed that previous historians, by focusing on these explorers' better-known contemporaries at the British Admiralty, had perhaps unwittingly continued that body's

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[78] See Richard Finnie, "Northern Photography," File 7; Alyce Finnie, "Burwash, Lachlin Taylor," File 8; Richard Finnie, "Roediger, Richard" and Richard Finnie, "Finnie, Oswald Sterling," File 12; Richard Finnie's autobiographical entry, File 13; all Volume 6, MG31 C6, LAC.

[79] Stefansson to George Douglas, "Additions to King Biography," 1 March 1950, MSS 196, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Correspondence, 1895-1962, RSC.

[80] Stefansson, *Discovery*, 147-48, 235-36.

commonly-held disregard, born of social snobbery and interpersonal tensions, for King and Belcher.[81] The short history of Canadian exploration held little cause for such contention, so this treatment is less evident in the corpus under primary examination here.[82] Yet this revisionism is worth noting within the array of the *Encyclopedia*'s biographical possibilities, particularly because of Douglas's and Stefansson's view of its importance.

In most cases, the preparation for and writing of biographies was relatively straightforward. A few subjects, however, proved much more difficult to know and to write. Close examination of one such man, Warburton Pike, will illustrate the processes at work in the collection, transmission, and verification of knowledge fit—and not fit—for publication in the *Encyclopedia*.

A hard fish to catch

In the autumn of 1949, Stefansson admitted that he had so far been unable to gain much information about Warburton Pike, a "remarkable winter traveller" and "one of the most important traveler-naturalists of his time," in Stefansson's opinion.[83] Pike had been an upper-class British sportsman and explorer of the late nineteenth century. His pioneering travels in the backcountry of northern British Columbia, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories supplied material for his two books, *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada* (1892) and *Through the Subarctic Forest* (1896). Stefansson considered that Pike's avid, detailed observations of wildlife and his hardy attitude toward travel, when combined with his early and successful expeditions, more than merited an entry in the *Encyclopedia*—if only accurate biographical information could be unearthed. Hence Stefansson set in motion the primary mechanism through which he

[81] George Douglas, "Admiral Sir Edward Belcher" and "Richard King," Files 6-8, Volume 2, MG30 B95, George Mellis Douglas fonds, LAC.

[82] Stefansson did not desire further controversy over the one major exception to this rule, his own Canadian Arctic Expedition. He spoke of his sorrow that R.M. Anderson would probably decline an offer of contribution to the *Encyclopedia*, and arranged to have biographies written of the expedition's members. See Stefansson to Max Dunbar, 23 December 1948 and "Conference with Dick and Alyce Finnie at Dearing Farm," unpublished memorandum, 29 August 1947; both Box 29, MSS 96, RSC. Stefansson likely demurred because he had already given his views on the expedition in his book *The Friendly Arctic*. Moreover, he thought it would be inappropriate to use the *Encyclopedia* to advance his own views on any topic. See Wilcox to Finnie, "Farming and Stock-Raising," 10 June 1947, File 2, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

[83] Stefansson to Launcelot Fleming, 14 September 1949, Box 30; Stefansson to Hermann Hagedorn, 20 March 1950, Box 31; both MSS 96, RSC. Present-day historians have likewise accorded Pike little treatment. See, however, Margaret Hobbs, "Purposeful Wanderers: Late Nineteenth Century Travellers to the Barren Lands," in *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe & Snowshoe*, eds. Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs (Toronto: Betelgeuse Books, 1985), 57-81; Gwen Hayball, *Warburton Pike: An Unassuming Gentleman* (Poole, Dorset: privately printed, 1994); Bob Henderson and Morten Asfeldt, "Warburton Pike: No Ordinary Shooting Expedition," in *Pike's Portage: Stories of a Distinguished Place*, eds. Morten Asfeldt and Bob Henderson (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2010), 63-78.

solicited and received information: his international network of correspondents. Before the end of the next year, at least thirty-two people had become embroiled in this particular quest for information. Stefansson considered the exercise an excellent demonstration of how the *Encyclopedia* could and would conquer difficult topics for the sake and betterment of public knowledge.[84]

Stefansson commenced the search along lines of geographical parallel. Pike had made Vancouver Island the centre of his activities for many years; therefore T.A. Rickard, also a resident, might either have met Pike or would be able to inquire among his friends and in local archives for information. Rickard's application to the Provincial Archives in Victoria returned two successes: a piece in the Victoria *Daily Colonist* written shortly after Pike's death in 1915, and the name of a local contact, Mr. A.R. Spalding, whom Pike had befriended and lived with for some time.[85]

Spalding had since died, but Lilias Spalding, his widow, became Stefansson's key informant on Pike. This position was gained both by virtue of her experiential credentials and the quantity and quality of her information. Besides her memories of Pike as her husband's friend, she had also lived in Pike's house on Saturna Island for some time as a child. She had, therefore, a longer acquaintance with him than anyone still alive in British Columbia by 1950.[86] Not only did she record her own recollections, but she also brought within Stefansson's reach others who had known Pike and could provide credible information about him.[87] Delighted with this textual harvest, Stefansson nevertheless attempted to draw further value from her. In addition to asking questions based on her supplied information, he also quoted information about Pike obtained elsewhere and asked how it measured up to her experience and knowledge of him. Outside information was also used to inspire contemplation of unexplained aspects of Pike's life, such as the circumstances surrounding his death.[88]

This correspondence between Stefansson and Spalding was nestled in a hive of Pike-related activity. Stefansson set queries going in the archives of Pike's known associates. Since Theodore Roosevelt had regarded Pike highly, and had once invited him to visit the White

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[84] Stefansson to John Field, 27 September 1949; Stefansson to John Field, 20 February 1950; both Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

[85] The article *cum* eulogy appeared on page 1 of the 30 October 1915 edition of the *Daily Colonist*. Stefansson to Rickard, 26 September 1949 and Rickard to Stefansson, 30 September 1949, both Box 31; Willard Ireland to Stefansson, 3 October 1949, Box 32; all MSS 96, RSC.

[86] Spalding, "Further notes regarding Warburton Pike," unpublished memorandum, c1950, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC.

[87] See particularly E.G. Beaumont to Stefansson, 22 March 1950, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.

[88] Stefansson to Spalding, 20 February 1950; Stefansson to Spalding, 9 May 1950; Spalding to Stefansson, 31 May 1950; all Box 32, MSS 96, RSC.

House, Stefansson had the records of the Roosevelt Memorial Association, then the Library of Congress, searched for any trace of their contact. This search, as well as the parallel one conducted in the national archives of Canada, proved fruitless.[89] Meanwhile, Stefansson commanded the near-constant attention of certain parties by sending them carbon copies of new pieces of information and asking them to comment as they saw fit. These individuals included the former ONR doyen of the *Encyclopedia*, Shelesnyak, and his successor, Dr. John Field; Rickard, whose initial help had set off the avalanche of information; James Wordie, the Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, who had agreed to write Pike's biography and coordinate the England-based research efforts into his life; W. Kaye Lamb, the chief librarian at the University of British Columbia and later the first Dominion Archivist of Canada; and two participants in Canadian arctic exploration, the ever-reliable George Douglas and Douglas's friend Guy Blanchet.

The textual threads that connected these correspondents criss-crossed an entire continent and ocean. Farthest west were Rickard, Blanchet, and Spalding on Vancouver Island, Pike's adopted home; farthest east was Wordie in England, Pike's native land; in between lay rural and urban sites in Ontario as well as the three major American cities of Baltimore, Washington, and New York. From the last place, Stefansson carefully directed and coordinated inquiry. At his request, research assistants copied out excerpts or entire letters, which he prefaced with individual notes to each recipient of a carbon copy. He noted all recipients on all copies, so as to make the passage of investigation traceable, if necessary. These paths could be deliberately revived in unexpected ways. Inspired by curiosity, Blanchet and his wife Eileen left their home in Victoria one day and piloted their boat some way north in the Strait of Georgia to visit Spalding at her summer home on South Pender Island. A letter from Spalding to Stefansson then retraced the contours of this retracing.[90] Pleasurable wanderings could be had not only in the pages of an encyclopedia, but in the pages that preceded those pages as well.

At the close of September 1950, one year after Stefansson had sparked and Rickard had fanned the search, enough information existed for Pike's biography—too much, even. Early reminiscences had foreshadowed what later information confirmed: there were some unusual,

[89] Stefansson to Archibald Roosevelt, 20 February 1950, and Arthur E. Young to Stefansson, 18 April 1950, both Box 32, MSS 96, RSC; Stefansson to Hermann Hagedorn, 20 March 1950; Hagedorn to Stefansson, 22 March 1950; L.A. Horton to Stefansson, 27 March 1950; Stefansson to Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 28 March 1950; all Box 31, MSS 96, RSC. For a description of the latter case, see Lamb to Stefansson, 4 April 1950, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.

[90] Spalding to Stefansson, 11 November 1950, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC. See also Douglas to J.C. Critchell-Bullock, 1 October 1950, MSS 196, RSC.

even unsavoury aspects to Pike's life. Like some other Englishmen in frontier regions, he exhibited a bipolar attitude toward comportment. He dressed immaculately for dinner in the polite societies of Vancouver and Victoria, and relished life with vermin and without underclothing in the backcountry.[91] Such quirks could be excused by reference to tendencies toward eccentricity both in upper-class Englishmen and in travelling naturalists of present and past centuries.[92] Pike's mental deterioration and eventual suicide in a Bournemouth sanatorium was harder to explain. Douglas, having mentioned such details in a letter, closes with the judgment, "These things, even if true, have no place in a biography."[93] The reproduction of this particular exploratory identity within the pages of the *Encyclopedia* was hedged about by moral filters that both allowed and rejected certain kinds of biographical information. While displays of revisionism were permissible, displays of immorality seem not to have been.

Stefansson appears not to have disagreed, and indeed, in comparable situations, he and Wilcox encouraged similar omissions.[94] Pike's peculiarities did not circumscribe his achievements, but to include the former could well have detracted from the latter. There was also the possibility of giving offence if such things appeared in print, since members of Pike's extended (if not immediate) family were likely still to be alive. Perhaps Stefansson's thoughts rested not far from those of his predecessor Diderot when the latter wrote, "I have no wish to see evil deeds preserved; it would be better if they had never taken place. Men have no need of bad examples, nor has human nature any need of being further cried down."[95] The tendency in earlier centuries to regard biography as a moral presentation of ideal personal and social qualities seems to have survived into the time of this encyclopedia's making. Opening with questions and closing with secrets, the construction of Warburton Pike's biography demonstrates some of the geographical, epistemological, and even moral considerations that

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[91] Belmore Browne to Stefansson, 9 December 1949, Box 20, MSS 96, RSC.

[92] The notion of eccentricity as a strategic presentation of self is analyzed in Cristina Grasseni, "Taxidermy as Rhetoric of Self-Making: Charles Waterton (1782-1865), Wandering Naturalist," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science, Part C* 29 (1998): 269-94. See also Roy Porter, "Gentlemen and Geology: The Emergence of a Scientific Career, 1660-1920," *The Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 809-36.

[93] Douglas to Stefansson, 2 December 1949, File 5, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC and MSS 196, RSC. Contemporaries of Pike suggested that he had been severely depressed over his inability to serve his country's army during World War I, and that this had been a major factor in prompting him to kill himself. See the correspondence from and regarding Pike in Files 6, 7, 8, and 11, Box 6, W.E. Oliver fonds, MS 2685, British Columbia Archives.

[94] Regarding another subject's use of narcotics, see Hobbs to Wilcox, 29 October 1949 and Wilcox to Hobbs, 9 November 1949, both Box 30, MSS 96, RSC.

[95] Diderot, "Encyclopedia," 300.

regularly framed the *Encyclopedia*'s textual production, if here in greater degree. It only remains to note that this entry, after so much effort, was never written.[96]

The women of the Library

While Stefansson's network of men confronted such problems, his much smaller group of almost exclusively female workers were composing their half of the *Encyclopedia* in the domestic spaces of the Stefansson Library. There has, as yet, been little examination of the role of women in encyclopedic production generally, although their presence has been noted in the workrooms of twentieth-century encyclopedias.[97] The wealth of information available on the Stefansson Library renders one able to study this example of knowledge production in relation to gender and place. The Library was both a physical instantiation of Stefansson's knowledge and an assemblage of a textual North that allowed an assumption of expertise—one that was interestingly, in the light of exploratory discourses, divorced from direct experience of the Arctic—and thereby the production of authoritative knowledge. Through these means, the women of the Library were inducted into the company of the *Encyclopedia*'s other arctic authorities, with some differences and restrictions. A consideration of this smaller community of knowledge producers also grants insight into the influence of spatial domains—the home, the library, the neighbourhood, the city—on intellectual endeavour.

In the mid-eighteenth century and before—that is, in the pre-collaborative age of encyclopedias—polymathic scholars often took sole responsibility for the composition of these texts. To complete such herculean tasks, these men drew on their universal learning and associated talents, such as the capacity to memorize large portions of information, and the ability to connect disparate bodies of thought, thus advancing the state of knowledge. The libraries of polymaths were ordered partly to imply that their owners were capable of grasping and controlling the entirety of what was known. Although both the occasion and cachet of polymaths waned as disciplinary specialization became increasingly valued, the breed never went extinct.[98] Stefansson was a polymath, and a good portion of his knowledge sprang from and resided in the books that he collected, read, and annotated. Moreover, the Stefansson Library had, by the mid-1940s, become the largest private collection of northern books,

[96] Wordie wrote to Stefansson on 27 July 1959 that "I myself was due to send in some articles and I had them in draft condition but I think [the *Encyclopedia*] has all collapsed." Box 32, MSS 96, RSC.
[97] Peter France calls for such investigation in "Organism," 69. Gillian Thomas's semi-scholarly monograph, cited above in fn77, is the only book-length inquiry into such matters.
[98] Richard Yeo, "Lost Encyclopedias: Before and after the Enlightenment," *Book History* 10 (2007): 51-53.

pamphlets, and manuscripts in the world. While it could not represent northern conditions exactly, the Library could suggest them in its fullness and contiguity of knowledge. The Library acted, then, as a simulacrum for both Stefansson and the North. Direct experience with this space seemed to have given the women who worked there an authority equivalent, in Stefansson's eyes, to those of people who had actually travelled through the North. This is especially notable in light of the well-established cultural tradition throughout the early twentieth century in which female travellers in the North were accorded much less respect and authority than their male counterparts.[99]

Libraries, like encyclopedias, baffle those who do not know how to navigate their spaces.[100] In Stefansson's claim that his library staff "formed a collective alter ego for me while I was away from New York lecturing," one locates the key to this collection's effective use.[101] Since the mid-1930s, one will recall, it had been both a reference library and a research centre that contracted its services to various organizations. Because the general public knew very little about the Subarctic and Arctic, newly hired staff had to submit to extensive topical and methodological training. During this novitiate, they read extensively about northern circumpolar matters. Once they could critically analyze pertinent source material and assemble the results of their inquiries into acceptable final form, they became fully functional arctic researchers.[102] By virtue of such schooling, these women not only gained an authoritative grasp of northern knowledge, but they also learned how to find information quickly within the Library's peculiar confines.

Like most such organizations, it had a card index of authors and titles, with additional filing under approximately 1,000 subject headings and extensive cross-referencing atop that. The value of this master key to the collection is reflected in ONR's request that it be microfilmed, as its loss would halt the *Encyclopedia*'s production.[103] The index would have been

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[99] See Barbara E. Kelcey, *Alone in Silence: European Women in the Canadian North before 1940* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001). In the postwar period, however, the presence of non-aboriginal women in the North was increasingly accepted. See Joan Sangster, "Constructing the 'Eskimo' Wife: White Women's Travel Writing, Colonialism, and the Canadian North, 1940-1960," in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity and Dissent, 1945-75*, eds. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 28.

[100] Yeo, "Lost," 54-55; Dolan, "Visions," 90.

[101] Stefansson, *Discovery*, 332.

[102] Stefansson to Shelesnyak, 14 July 1949, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.

[103] W.W. Strohsehn to Director, Naval Records Management Center, 1 May 1947, Box 27, MSS, RSC. Stefansson was not the only human metonym for a collection of knowledge. Wilcox, by dint of her long service to Stefansson, served both as Stefansson's chief substitute and as an alternate embodiment of the Library/*Encyclopedia*. Her employer noted that "while she lived, few had more book knowledge of the Arctic" than she; he later regretted that while she had left the *Encyclopedia* manuscript in excellent order, "some keys



Figure 5.2. Stefansson in his study at Dartmouth College, surrounded by the apparatus of arctic scholarship, including a large northern circumpolar map. Credit: Stefansson Arctic Institute.

hard-pressed to match the library's rapid expansion even in the *Encyclopedia*'s short lifetime. Holdings appear to have mushroomed from 30,000 items in the early 1940s to 45,000 by the end of 1951.[104] Unlike most such organizations, its containment strategy was completely decentralized and unplanned: as holdings increased, another apartment was rented, and books, book shelves, desks, and workers were there installed. The process was repeated once each new room had been filled to maximum capacity.[105] Indeed, especially in its early days, the Library was inextricably intertwined with Stefansson's domestic spaces. Evelyn Stefansson noted that some index cards had contained descriptions of the locations of books such as "the cabinet over the icebox in 2B kitchen" or "last seen in VS's bedroom."[106] More will be said about the Library's physicality shortly. Even this brief summary demonstrates that the ability to navigate

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to her system were in her mind." Stefansson to Archibald Day, 25 September 1957 and 10 October 1957, both Box 32, MSS 96, RSC.

[104] "Friends of Encyclopedia Arctica"; untitled Dartmouth College News Service release, 10 December 1951, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC. Exact figures of holdings are difficult to ascertain. The library was not entirely composed of Subarctic and Arctic materials, and it is sometimes hard to discern whether reports give figures only for this portion of the collection, or for the entire collection.

[105] Evelyn Stefansson, "Postlude," 394. The Stefanssons' farm in Vermont stored duplicate books as well as material, such as complete sets of magazines, to which the staff did not require frequent access. Stefansson, *Discovery*, 337.

[106] Evelyn Stefansson, "The Bookman," *Polar Notes*, no. 4 (September 1962): 45. She also notes that early library workers had made such "unprofessional" descriptions because of their lack of training in librarianship and research.

the Library's spatial layout was just as essential as familiarity with its intellectual content for the successful production of knowledge about the Arctic.

The women brought native skills to the Library that complemented those they would acquire. Ruby Lee Collins, the chief librarian, possessed a general aptitude for research, critical thinking, and composition honed by a Bachelor of Arts degree from Radcliffe College. Herma Briffault, a research assistant, drew upon her long career in freelance writing, which included stints of ghostwriting, editing, translation, indexing, and bibliographic work. Important to the *Encyclopedia*'s cosmopolitan work was linguistic facility.[107] As the *Encyclopedia*'s Russian specialist, Stefansson hired Eugenie "Bee" Olkhine, who spoke more than five languages and had previously worked at the League of Nations. Since much Russian scholarship on the Arctic was written in German, Stefansson also hired Felizia Seyd, a native German speaker born in Dusseldorf, as a translator.[108]

For its scope, the *Encyclopedia Arctica* had a very small central staff. Only 8-12 salaried workers were employed full-time on an enterprise that one expert on encyclopedic production judged would require a minimum of 31.[109] Whereas women in larger encyclopedic organizations were permitted only to work on "drudge" tasks such as indexing and fact checking, the women of this enterprise enjoyed a much greater role in intellectual output, sometimes to the extent where they doubted their suitability for the work.[110] Their chief tasks were the rewriting of the Library's arctic guidebooks to serve as the *Encyclopedia*'s geographical entries, and the researching and composition of hundreds of minor biographies, the subjects of whom were not important enough to attract outside contributors. The women also helped Wilcox edit manuscripts received from the *Encyclopedia*'s external collaborators. Finally, in the project's late stages, they did such mundane tasks as fact checking, indexing, inserting cross-references, standardizing bibliographies, and typing manuscripts for the printers.

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[107] Stefansson to Robert M. Kamins, "Ruby Lee Collins," 7 August 1950, Box 32; Herma Briffault, form letter, 4 December 1948, Box 30; both MSS 96, RSC.

[108] Stefansson, *Discovery*, 362. There is very little biographical information on these women extant in the *Encyclopedia Arctica* files besides dates and places of birth. In 1947, the first year of their employment on the *Encyclopedia*, Collins was 33, Olkhine was 50, and Seyd was 54. Collins's assistant, Helen Isenminger, was 27; Olga Dalman Goolsby, the chief clerk, was 32; and Wilcox was 53. Briffault, first employed two years later, was 51. All of the women working in the office, with the exception of Wilcox, appear to have been unmarried, and in some cases they were divorced or widowed.

[109] Alvin Johnson to Stefansson, 11 March 1949, Box 30, MSS 96, RSC.

[110] Thomas, *Respect*, 21-26. When Collins and Isenminger, the two librarians, were asked to take on more writing, editorial, and bookkeeping duties in the *Encyclopedia*'s third year, they both professed worries about their inadequacy to undertake such tasks. See Collins to Wilcox, 11 August 1949; Isenminger to Wilcox, 24 August 1949; Wilcox to Isenminger, 29 August 1949; all Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.

Any of the women could easily have shared the emotions that gave rise to the words attributed to Evelyn Stefansson in the *New Yorker*'s piece on the *Encyclopedia*, published in February 1949: "I'm kind of a fraud, though. I've never been to the arctic. I've just learned a lot from Stef, and, of course, from our library."[111] Could book knowledge on its own, learned hurriedly at that, generate expertise sufficient for the composition of half an encyclopedia? To counter any doubt, Stefansson erected a set of systematic practices to ensure that the authority of these women to contribute to the *Encyclopedia* would be regarded as sufficient. Because of the size of the staff, Stefansson and Wilcox were both able to guide and assess internal activities closely enough to assure the quality of textual production. They preferred researchers to specialize in one geographic area after their initial circumpolar training. Moreover, they would shift responsibilities as they attained a better sense of each person's strengths and weaknesses. There were also limits to the authority of these women, unlike the relative freedom given to external contributors. Briffault once overstepped her bounds in attacking the factual basis of several articles submitted by Eugene A. Golomshtok, an authority on Siberian ethnology and archaeology. Upon further examination, Wilcox found that Golomshtok could substantiate his claims, whereas Briffault's citations were often incorrect or masked her own opinions.[112] Briffault's idiosyncrasies in this and other cases led Stefansson and Wilcox to delimit her workload carefully.[113]

The women's daily work, which built upon their initial training, confirmed their expertise and permitted them entry into Stefansson's personal network of arctic knowledge producers. The intimate discourses of respect and friendship that strengthened that network and permitted the trustworthy production of knowledge within its confines existed also in the Library environs. For reasons of personal trust as well as intellectual investment, Stefansson preferred to rehire previous employees; thus, many of the *Encyclopedia* workers had known both him and Wilcox for years. The Library's atmosphere was not only domestic, but even familial, with Stefansson the admired paterfamilias and Wilcox the adored matriarch. The women's letters and memos blur the lines between the personal and professional with Stefanssonian vigour. Speaking of *Encyclopedia* matters and personal anecdotes in turn, they often end "Affectionately yours" or "With love." The entrenchment of goodwill was crucial to the *Encyclopedia*'s functioning, as the staff was effectively unsupervised for at least a quarter of the year. Every summer since 1941,

[111] "Encyclopedia Arctica," *The New Yorker*, 26 February 1949, 21.
[112] "Golomshtok: EA Anthropology," unpublished memorandum, 17 May 1949, Box 28, MSS 96, RSC.
[113] "Confidential: No. 1 Agenda for VS-ORW conference, May 28 1949," unpublished memorandum, Box 28, MSS 96, RSC.

Stefansson and Wilcox, with their respective spouses, had moved to their farms in Vermont, situated five miles apart, where they felt that they could work more effectively than in the city.[114] With this displacement of editorial presence, the central office itself became part of the *Encyclopedia*'s satellite network of contributors. The need for continual communication between New York City and rural Vermont is only one iteration of the complex relationship between place and production that underlay the *Encyclopedia*, and that is worth closer examination at several levels.

Beginning once more with the Library, one can now inquire into the effect its unusual emplotment had on the knowledge produced therein. The library's centrifugal arrangements were partly due to the difficulties of finding adjacent spaces during World War II, and partly due to Stefansson's disregard of physical comfort, which may have been socialized into his employees.[115] In 1948, the second year of the *Encyclopedia*, the Library was housed in apartments 2B and 2E at 67 Morton Street, and another apartment at 59 Morton Street that was several floors from ground level. Shelesnyak's visit to the Library in March of that year provoked a horrified reaction to working conditions there. Desks were makeshift and positioned too close to pathways, so that researchers were jostled regularly by passing colleagues. Piles of books and files on the floors hindered free movement, and private conferences were impossible without turning a worker out of her desk temporarily. Shelesnyak judged that the lack of space was seriously hampering efficient production, and recommended the Library's move to larger quarters as soon as practicable.[116]

The November lease of a ground-floor space at 460 Hudson Street, just around the corner, improved the situation somewhat. The final solution, however, came with the rental of two floors of a house at 4 St. Luke's Place, only six blocks from their Morton Street headquarters, and next door to the building in which the Stefanssons lived. The move was accomplished in late December 1948 and early January 1949. The new quarters offered several advantages. Everyone "doing the type of work improved by uninterrupted quiet" now had private or semi-private offices. The upper level had a large reading room with high ceilings, in which all the books were installed, and researchers no longer wasted time travelling between apartments to retrieve needed material. The consolidation of all staff into one space facilitated the easy supervision of, and frequent consultation on *Encyclopedia* matters. The ample room

[114] Stefansson, *Discovery*, 243, 337; Stefansson to Lamb, 3 April 1948, Box 29, MSS 96, RSC.
[115] Evelyn Stefansson, "Postlude," 394; Earl P. Hanson, *Stefansson: Prophet of the North* (New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1941), 173-74.
[116] "Memo of Dr. M.C. Shelesnyak's Visit to Morton St.," 11 March 1948, Box 30, MSS 96, RSC.

available for storage and expansion dampened the need for future relocation, which necessitated the use of hours that could be better spent on the *Encyclopedia*.[117] Reviewing matters in March 1949, Stefansson conceded that the new space had enabled a substantial increase in productivity.[118]

The library's remove to a self-contained house, one bordering on the Stefanssons' happy home, makes the familial comparison more obvious. One letter to Wilcox, upon hearing of a medical affliction, exclaimed, "We ALL hope you're all better—Olga, Helen, Felizia, Bee, Bill, Spike and the Silver Pussy."[119] In their coffee breaks and lunch hours, the women enjoyed the visits of a neighbourhood cat, tended plants on windowsills, and attacked the garden in sporadic fits of enthusiasm. The two librarians went to movies and learned to speak a Chinese dialect together, in addition to living in the same apartment building nearby. Indeed, about half the workers lived within a few blocks of the Library, signifying a further mingling of personal and professional boundaries. Beyond the level of the neighbourhood, New York City itself had an occasional effect on their work. In the summer of 1949, a heat wave that persisted for much of July and August caused communal misery and friction. "Yesterday the staff was in a state of semi-collapse," Lee Collins wrote to Wilcox. "Very interesting combination of responses. Herma was ill and home in bed. Felizia had a headache and was likewise. And even I was so tired I could hardly sit up. Went home and straight to bed at 5."[120] No one suffered more than Briffault: she developed a terrible heat rash and had frequent fainting spells. These physical afflictions prompted verbal outpourings that damaged staff morale and productivity, as Collins recorded:

> I just came down from upstairs (Herma is not in today) and Helen and Felizia were working away quietly and happily at the two desks at the north end of the floor. Felizia admitted that without Herma's constant invective against the weather, she was quite comfortable. Today is hotter than yesterday. ... We're all sick and tired of all this talk about the weather.[121]

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[117] "Possible Move to Larger and More Suitable Quarters," unpublished memorandum, 23 November 1948, Box 30, MSS 96, RSC.
[118] Stefansson to Shelesnyak, 11 March 1949, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.
[119] Collins to Wilcox, 17 August 1949, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC. Bill, or William, Mandel was the one male research worker on the encyclopedia's staff. He worked there for less than a year and a half, and was dismissed at the end of 1949.
[120] Collins to Wilcox, 15 July 1949. The contents of the folders "OFFICE: Herma Briffault 1949" and "OFFICE & O.R. WILCOX: Memos, Correspondence, etc. 1949" yield a good multivocal picture of this affair, and of the "domestic" life of the office in general. For the latter, see also the folder labelled "EA Office." All of these files may be found in Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.
[121] Collins to Wilcox, 11 August 1949, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.

With the cooling of temperatures, both naturally and through the purchase of electric fans, office harmony was resumed.[122] Nor was the irony of working on an arctic encyclopedia in such environs lost on the women; mentally, they sought the regions of their research. "I'm still nestling in the ice off the north coast of Alaska," Collins wrote. "Most comfortable this weather."[123] While the specific physical conditions of encyclopedic production could be challenging, the multiple spatial levels of the *Encyclopedia* were experienced positively overall. The Stefansson Library served as an innovative kind of space in which women were able to construct identities as arctic authorities. In learning how to successfully work within and navigate the simulated "arctic" space of the Library—which, somewhat ironically, was also an explicitly domestic space, of the kind amenable to traditional practices of female labour—these women seem to have gained an authority not dissimilar to that enjoyed by travellers or fieldworkers with northern experience. Their work may even be characterized as productive of a limited, or quasi-exploratory identity. Stefansson reinforced this feminine "exploratory" authority with specific practices of study that ensured the women could produce knowledge of a quality similar to that of the encyclopedia's external contributors. Indeed, the Library's workers and outside collaborators alike were part of a far-ranging network of those who were as much arctic enthusiasts as authorities. The friendly ties that acted as the *Encyclopedia*'s nervous system atop its textual bones were fortified by Stefansson's and Wilcox's continuous encouragement and gratitude, apparent in so many of their office memos and letters. The dissolution of this encyclopedic community, especially the microcosmic one at 4 St. Luke's Place, was one of Stefansson and Wilcox's saddest tasks upon the termination of the *Encyclopedia*'s contract.

The fall of the *Encyclopedia Arctica*

The *Encyclopedia* had never enjoyed secure passage. Each year, Stefansson had needed to submit an application for the contract's renewal in order to receive the next year's funding. In early 1949, Stefansson and Shelesnyak took stock of progress, and decided that the *Encyclopedia* could not be satisfactorily completed before 31 December 1949, as had been contracted. While the *Encyclopedia* enjoyed a fourth year of preparation in 1950 on the somewhat reduced yearly appropriation of $60,000, Stefansson sought expert estimates of the

[122] "[S]ince the cooler weather, Herma is her old charming self." Collins to Wilcox, 17 August 1949, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.
[123] Collins to Wilcox, 15 July 1949, Box 31, MSS 96, RSC.

length and funding necessary to complete the work, and submitted a formal request for the project's long-term extension in July.[124] He considered that an additional $300,000 spaced over three or four years would ensure its successful conclusion. Instead, at a conference with Field on 16 November 1950, he and Olive Wilcox were notified that they had one year and $25,000 to wind up the project and submit as many of its manuscripts as possible to ONR. Both editors demanded the rationale for this action, but were denied an official response.[125] Possible explanations, many of them political in nature, emerged gradually in the following decade, and will be briefly outlined.

A project such as the *Encyclopedia* that both celebrated and depended upon international cooperation became incompatible in light of the growing ill will between the United States and the Soviet Union. The domestic American development of suspicion toward Communism that bloomed savagely into McCarthyism regarded any liaison with Soviet interests as potentially treasonous. Both the *Encyclopedia* and Stefansson were placed under intense scrutiny.[126] The former's success relied upon good Russian material and able translators, both of which Stefansson had toiled to obtain in the unfriendly political climate. When ONR grew concerned about where the translators' loyalties lay, Stefansson clumsily reassured the Navy that not only was the information with which they worked unclassified, but it was likely in Soviet hands already. He outright refused to fire one translator against ONR's explicit wishes.[127] Such defiance would not have aided the *Encyclopedia*'s cause.

Stefansson's personal history was hardly calculated to endear him to anti-Red forces. He had figured prominently in such pro-Soviet organizations as Russian War Relief and the National Committee of American Soviet Friendship.[128] In his capacity as president of the Explorers' Club, he had spent weeks at the Soviet embassy in New York during a search for missing Soviet flyers

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[124] A summary of the *Encyclopedia*'s state of affairs is given in "Encyclopedia Arctica Conversations." The proposal for extension was submitted to Field on 27 July 1950.

[125] Stefansson to Field, 27 November 1950 and Stefansson to Field, 27 November 1951, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC. Stefansson fairly pleads for an explanation in the latter: "One of our many embarrassments in framing a statement is that we do not know what to tell [our supporters] about why ONR made this decision at a stage when the program which had been outlined ... was so near completion. Here we need your help: Please let us know at your early convenience how to state correctly, and in a form agreeable to the Navy, the reason or reasons for the action taken through you by the Office of Naval Research."

[126] Stefansson makes the following contentions in some detail in his letters to Archibald Day of 30 September and 10 October 1957, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC. His attribution of causality is wrong in one case. He posits that the Navy was especially worried about outside intervention in their affairs, having just witnessed the Army's abject subordination in the McCarthy-inspired investigation of their Signal Corps Engineering Lab at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. However, this incident occurred in August 1953, well after the cancellation of the *Encyclopedia.*

[127] Stefansson, *Discovery*, 364. This appears to have been Mandel, who was eventually let go as much for budgetary reasons as security ones.

[128] Srebrnik, "Radical," 58.

in 1937. Moreover, he was further tainted by association with individuals embroiled in McCarthy's attacks. In 1950, Shelesnyak was forced to leave his new position as administrator of AINA's Baltimore branch, which was based at Johns Hopkins University, over a one-time ballot cast for the Communist ticket in a New York state election. A friend to Shelesnyak, Stefansson also had ties of friendship and property with Owen Lattimore, the anthropologist whom McCarthy named as the top Soviet spy in America that autumn. The fatal blow to Stefansson's own reputation may have come in August of that year, when Louis Budenz, a former member of the Communist Party, denounced Stefansson as a Communist before a Senate Internal Security Subcommittee hearing. Stefansson responded to the charge, as to such fears in general, with humour. "What a honor," the *New York Times* quotes him as saying. "I would hate to be called a Communist by almost anyone else, but I don't mind it much from Budenz."[129] One assumes from ONR's termination of the *Encyclopedia* that the Navy did not find the accusation quite as amusing.

Changing conditions within ONR itself likely affected the *Encyclopedia*'s fate as well. While Shelesnyak had been a passionate advocate for arctic research, his successor, John Field, had no particular interest in either the Arctic or the *Encyclopedia*, which was only one of sixty projects that he oversaw.[130] Moreover, since 1949, the Navy had pressured ONR to support more projects with immediate operational relevance; this desire only increased with the advent of the Korean War in early 1950. ONR, in turn, became less accommodating of projects with primarily civilian benefit, and more aware of the need to maintain good relations with Congress to secure their future yearly appropriations. Field would have had no particular reason to challenge the new status quo by championing the *Encyclopedia*. Stefansson had become a political liability, and avoiding dangerous political alliances was part of Field's role. In fact, it could be argued that the *Encyclopedia* and ONR had always been a poor fit. ONR was best able to support small-scale research projects; most of its larger initiatives met with failure.[131]

In 1951, its final year, a skeleton crew of workers ended all the *Encyclopedia*'s connections with outside contributors. They also worked furiously to edit, check, and type manuscripts "of immediate interest," mainly those with scientific content, to ONR. Those

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[129] "Currie is Linked to Reds' Smearing – Budenz Tells Senators Ex-Aide of Roosevelt Helped Drive on Anti-Soviet Officials," *New York Times*, 24 August 1951, 8. Stefansson's investigation by McCarthyites is treated in David H. Price, *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI's Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), chapter 14.

[130] "Office Memorandum, Baltimore Trip, November 9-10, 1949," Box 31, MSS 96, RSC. Shelesnyak felt the *Encyclopedia*'s failure was partly his fault, in that he should have chosen a more sympathetic successor. See Shelesnyak to Stefansson, 8 July 1955, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC.

[131] Sapolsky, *Science*, 57-64, 94-98.

manuscripts were bundled into fourteen volumes, which had been formed out of collections of broadly similar subject material. Most of the biographical entries and other material "not of immediate interest" remained in the Library's keeping.[132] In a rhetorical move that must have pained Stefansson, Field no longer acknowledged that his office had ever supported the *Encyclopedia*. That Stefansson planned to make such a work out of the assorted manuscripts that ONR had commissioned was viewed as "a happy coincidence."[133] At the end of 1951, the survivors staggered off to their homes—Olive Wilcox to Brooklyn, where she was to die of cancer four years later, and Stefansson and Evelyn to Hanover, New Hampshire. By agreeing to house both the Stefanssons and their Library, Dartmouth College offered them relief from the financial ruin exerted by the *Encyclopedia*'s collapse. Various attempts to resurrect the project followed, but none ever came to fruition. Stefansson came to deem it "one of the chief adventures and greatest tragedies of my life."[134]

The *Encyclopedia* ultimately rose and fell on the tides of the American military's wartime and postwar interest in the Arctic as a strategic geopolitical zone, and later, its increasingly interventionist approach to foreign policy. It became the victim of a creed that viewed knowledge as best kept secret, even to the detriment of its own country's citizens. By contrast, the *Encyclopedia* was the greatest single signifier of Stefansson's lifelong ecumenicism, as has been noted throughout this chapter. It heeded neither national borders nor scholarly disciplines, nor yet did it bow under time's weight. Stefansson charged this project with representing the Arctic truthfully, even agelessly, to all of mankind, who could make free use of it as they saw fit. In fact, it seemed to have an even greater purpose, which Stefansson may not have realized himself, but to which all his correspondence testifies. He consistently saw connections between the Arctic and the rest of the world that eluded everyone else, and in his mind, traces of the Arctic could be found anywhere and at any time on Earth. Stefansson sought not merely to present the Arctic to the world, but to remake the world in the image of the Arctic, and endow all people thereby with the far-sightedness he had always possessed.

This spectre of a global Arctic was realized insofar as Stefansson was able to marshal and even manufacture authoritative contributors in support of his enterprise. The making of the *Encyclopedia* provided vivid illustration of the ways in which Stefansson mobilized older

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[132] Wilcox to Plisner, 26 December 1951, Box 27, MSS 96, RSC.
[133] Field to Stefansson, 29 December 1950, Box 27 and S.R. Galler to Robert E. Frost, 28 June 1951, Box 32; both MSS 96, RSC.
[134] Stefansson to Karl Terzaghi, "Encyclopedia Arctica and an Autobiography," 13 May 1955, Box 32, MSS 96, RSC.

exploratory paradigms of knowledge production, including his networks of correspondence, in order to discover fact, assess it in private reflection and group discussion, and transform it into coherent knowledge. The nature of each contributor's expertise and the spaces in which these processes occurred were instrumental, rather than incidental, to the finished product. Without judging Stefansson's proclamation of audience disingenuous, one must seriously consider the possibility that, as in many collaborative encyclopedias, the primary audience was actually the collaborators themselves.[135] They would have been the principal beneficiaries of such a work—and they were, in that their activities produced a mass of unpublished knowledge for their use and enjoyment. Moreover, reading these manuscripts more than a half-century later, it is clear that the *Encyclopedia* records *their* views of Arctic history, *their* hopes for the region's future. Although their words have been entombed in the archive rather than enshrined in encyclopedic fastness, the *Encyclopedia* and its attendant documents still commemorate this group of arctic knowledge producers. The next and final chapter will engage more directly with ideas of commemoration by examining the mnemonic and historical discourses which underlaid certain individual and collective projects undertaken by the subjects of this dissertation in their last years of life.

[135] Danny P. Wallace and Connie Van Fleet, "The Democratization of Information? Wikipedia as a Reference Resource," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 45 (2005): 102.

Chapter 6:
Remembering Northern Exploration

Think of the end of life, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast
This present of ours with that hopeful Past.
George Douglas, quoting Robert Browning[1]

Scientific and exploratory clashes

The last several chapters have sought to demonstrate the continued deployment of exploratory ways of knowing and understanding northern Canada in the postwar period by drawing upon the words and actions of Douglas, Stefansson, and Finnie. This chapter will open with a kind of prelude that describes a very explicit condemnation, situated within the exploratory tradition, of the new scientific and administrative power over northern activity and representation of the 1940s. This condemnation, along with similar evidence, indicates a clash over the place of memory and history in modern scientific and exploratory discourses, as well as the larger place of the individual in modernity.

Dating the letter October 4, 1945, Finnie wrote, across the top of the page, "confidential"—a term to which he almost never resorted in his correspondence with Douglas. Later, the words "not sent" were added. The need for unusual caution is clarified upon contemplation of the letter's incendiary content, which took the form of a sustained and deeply cynical critique of the Arctic Institute of North America, newly created in 1944. AINA had been formed as a joint collaboration between a number of Canadian and American northern enthusiasts in order to provide a base for natural, physical, and social scientific research in the North American Arctic. Its Canadian founders were either drawn from or connected to a new group of "northern nationalists": powerful businessmen, senior federal bureaucrats and diplomats, scientists, and other intellectuals who advocated a heightened level of Canadian political and scientific involvement in the North throughout the 1940s and early 1950s.[2]

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[1] George Douglas to George Whalley, 3 October 1955, File 18, Box 2, George Whalley fonds, Location 1032c, Queen's University Archives (hereafter cited as QUA) and File 33, Volume 2, George Mellis Douglas fonds, MG30 B95, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter cited as LAC). The quotation is from the poem "The Last Ride Together" (1855). Douglas has slightly misquoted lines 52-54, which run, correctly: "Look at the end of work, contrast / The petty done, the undone vast / This present of theirs with the hopeful past!"

[2] Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988); Grant, "Northern Nationalists: Visions of a New North, 1940-1950,"

Somewhat surprisingly, given his experience of northern travel and his many friendships within the northern administration, Finnie felt that he had been deliberately excluded from this group; he had certainly not been invited to the preliminary meetings that had led to the creation of AINA.[3]

Finnie's bitterness over his exclusion no doubt fuelled this letter, which furnishes an illuminating personal interpretation of the clash between northern scientific and exploratory identities and practices in the 1940s. Finnie inveighed against the Institute's "tight little group of young (or youngish) men—geologists and the like—who are striving to make it the means of promoting their particular hobbies."[4] These scientific men, he felt, wanted to discard northern exploratory tradition entirely: "They consider that their own theories of northern travel and so on are the last word—and that the oldtimers like you [Douglas] and Stef, though you did splendid pioneering—are now thirty years behind." He suspected darkly that Stefansson, although a member of the Institute's board of directors, might not remain in that position for long: "I shouldn't be at all surprised if Stef, once having lent his name, prestige and enthusiasm to the enterprise to get it launched, were gently eased out." Neatly inverting the usual ascription of professionalization in such scientific and exploratory clashes, he considers explorers to have the greater claim to northern authority: "In short, the amateurs are making it tough for the professionals."

This outburst—and not just this outburst—provokes questions about the different engagement of scientists and explorers with practices of memory and history in the postwar period. The correspondence of Finnie and Douglas reveals their mutual belief that some of these new northern fieldworkers actively disdained or ignored the experience of past travellers in the region. "It would only be cramping their style and threatening their raison d'etre," as Finnie put it elsewhere, "to hint that practical information on equipment operation in the North ... had already been gained and was available to anyone who needed it. They preferred to start

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in *For Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow*, eds. Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison (North York, ON: Captus Press, 1989), 47-70.

[3] The reasons for this exclusion are unclear. Certainly, Finnie's lack of university education sat ill alongside the Ivy League and Oxbridge postgraduate degrees that many of these northern nationalists held; indeed, he had already been denied the post of Canadian consul to Greenland in 1941 on this basis. Moreover, he felt that a senior member of the group, H.L. Keenleyside—who worked in the Department of External Affairs and would soon become the deputy minister of the Department of Mines and Resources—disliked him personally, and had blocked his participation in the new political and scientific initiatives surrounding the North that were then percolating in southern Canada. See Finnie to Stefansson, 29 August 1941, File 9, Volume 7, Richard Sterling Finnie fonds, MG31 C6, LAC and Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Correspondence, 1895-1962, MSS 196, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (hereafter cited as RSC).

[4] For this quote and those that follow, see Finnie to Douglas, 4 October 1945 (unsent), File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

afresh."[5] Douglas resented what he considered the personal lack of respect and attention that one such scientist, Thomas Manning, had paid to his friend Blanchet and his experience of northern conditions on one occasion. He had the impression that "Manning thought he knew far more about Hudson Bay than Guy could tell him."[6] Years later, Stefansson noted a similar lack of interest in arctic history amongst members of AINA, who were interested in publishing only the hard scientific material from the *Encyclopedia Arctica* manuscript, much to his chagrin.[7] It is often written that the northern nationalists felt a new sense of responsibility toward ensuring the future political, social, and economic development of the North.[8] Judging by the evidence presented above, however, some among them may not have felt similarly responsible for the preservation and commemoration of *past* endeavour there.[9]

Such evidence aligns with new research on scientific and military activities in the postwar North that locates within them a discourse of novelty endemic to high modernist projects of that era.[10] At the same time that such northern fieldworkers continued to draw upon the noble discursive tradition of exploration to describe and justify their work, some of them foregrounded the novelty of their work by downplaying or omitting to acknowledge the accomplishments or contributions of their immediate predecessors in the region. This unsociable behaviour broke with a main, oft-noted feature of general exploratory discourse: the assiduous placing of oneself within lineages of endeavour in a particular area or region. "[L]ater

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[5] Finnie to Douglas, 22 February 1946, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[6] Douglas to Finnie, 20 February 1950, File 4, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. Douglas also reacted badly to Manning's unwillingness to share information about some recent geographical discoveries in Foxe Basin: "I was much interested to hear what he had to say about that new island in Foxe Basin and the little I did obtain was like drawing teeth. In fact he seemed to think that my real and natural interest was mere curiosity that he had no call to satisfy; and he appeared surprised and displeased that I should have the recently issued map of the islands that he hadn't seen himself!" What Douglas considered Manning's personal rudeness, combined with his obstruction of northern information, produced a conversation very unlike those he was used to conducting with other northern experts, and very unsatisfactory as a result.

[7] "EA was planned as a regional encyclopedia, not merely for science but for all sorts of knowledge–not merely for the mathematical and physical sciences, nor even for these supplemented by the social sciences. It was planned instead for all fields. Like [the encyclopedias] Americana and Britannica it was to deal competently with the sciences but was to handle with equal competence such things as languages and literatures, history and biography, religion and folklore, music and games, art and architecture." Stefansson, "Encyclopedia Arctica and the Arctic Institute," unpublished memorandum dated 15 December 1953, Box 32, The Encyclopedia Arctica Manuscript, MSS 96, RSC. The dominance of scientific disciplines over others in postwar arctic research circles is noted in Matthew Farish and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "High Modernism in the Arctic: Planning Frobisher Bay and Inuvik," *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009): 526.

[8] Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?*, 97, 208, 244; Grant, "Northern Nationalists"; Richard C. Powell, "Science, Sovereignty and Nation: Canada and the Legacy of the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58," *Journal of Historical Geography* 34 (2008): 636; Farish and Lackenbauer, "High Modernism," 518.

[9] This observation means to suggest this trend as one for further scholarly investigation rather than to assert its inviolate or universal truth; indeed, it is qualified specifically at the end of this chapter.

[10] Farish and Lackenbauer, "High Modernism," 532; Bocking, "A Disciplined Geography," 274.

travelers [cycled] back over their predecessors by editing their texts and redrawing their routes on fresh maps," Graham Burnett notes, "all the while borrowing orienting points, geographical authority, and ennobling historical context from them."[11]

Douglas, Stefansson, Finnie, and Blanchet might well have expected to receive similar treatment from those travellers who followed their trails across the North. The very different pattern of treatment that they perceived in the postwar era may have prompted some doubts about the security of their place in history and that of their contemporaries. If they and their exploratory contributions to knowledge were not valued, and thereby would not be commemorated by their successors, then who would value their exploration? Who would commemorate them as explorers? Having suggested one possible context in which their fear of being forgotten arose near the end of their lives, this chapter is now primarily concerned to delineate the ways in which they sought to leave behind evidence of their actions for future generations who might be more interested in times and deeds past.

Northern commemorations

Cultural historians have never been more preoccupied than today with the relationship of memory to history, both in its present and past incarnations. This final chapter will limn the contours of these concepts as they intersected in the course of certain commemorative activities that Douglas, Blanchet, and Stefansson undertook in the 1950s and 1960s.[12] The concerns and difficulties that these men experienced as they strove to record and preserve twentieth-century northern history reflect some of the political, social, intellectual, and emotional negotiations that were then taking place more widely regarding the status and place of the North in Canadian society, some of which have already been raised. In their motions, too, one can sense strains of wider societal conflicts that Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie locate in the early postwar period. These tensions—between popular democracy and control by experts, private civic values and public state citizenship, individual self-fulfillment and communitarian obligations, and, most importantly, between tradition and modernity—inhere in a close reading of their actions and reactions.[13]

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[11] D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 39.

[12] Douglas, Blanchet, and Stefansson are here examined together as generational counterparts who died between 1962 and 1966. Finnie's commemorative activities in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, including those that aimed to preserve the memory of these three men, lie outside the scope of this chapter.

[13] Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, "Introduction: Recasting Canada's Post-War Decade," in *Cultures of Citizenship in Post-War Canada, 1940-1955*, eds. Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau (Montreal and

Much has been written about the scientific and governmental investment in knowing and controlling the postwar Canadian North. This chapter will consider alternative, more consciously *historical* ways of understanding the North at this time, which drew upon older exploratory traditions of individual experience, colonial intimacy, domestic sites of knowledge production, and responsibility to prior activity. Douglas and Blanchet, in particular, sought, with both success and failure, to inscribe the facts of the North they had known first-hand, and to contextualize their experiences within a nascent early-twentieth-century northern history. In addition to the paucity of interest that northern scientists showed in their past fieldwork, Douglas and Blanchet perceived a general public and professional historical indifference to the things they wanted others to remember. At times, both men also struggled with the physical, emotional, and intellectual rigours of the production of historical knowledge. Their history-making activities, as much as their fieldwork and their correspondences, should be understood as practices of exploration—ones, at times, as trying as those which they had performed in the North, even though they were mainly performed in mundane and domestic spaces.

The actions of Douglas, Blanchet, and Stefansson as well will first be plotted within contemporary academic dialogue on memory and history, and then situated with respect to other representations of the Canadian North from the 1940s to the 1960s. A thematic approach to their activities will delineate their struggles with questions of authority and duty, composition, scale, and audience in their commemorations live and stillborn. A brief evocation of two situations that show this kaleidoscope of variables in full motion will lend narrative force to the analysis, which closes with a suggestion of precisely who did remember Douglas and Blanchet, and their northern contemporaries, in the years after their deaths.

History and memory

The centrality of the concept of memory in present-day historical and historiographical thinking is no longer in dispute. It has been utilized and analyzed extensively over the past 25 years, both as a historical source of knowledge and as a situated historical phenomenon.[14] As part of the discipline's new self-awareness and self-consciousness in the wake of various crises of representation, a debate over the relationship of this fledgling topic to its parent field has

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Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 14. See also Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherdale, introduction to *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent*, eds. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 1-20.

[14] Peter Burke, "History as Social Memory," in *Memory: History, Culture, and the Mind*, ed. Thomas Butler (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 97-113.

arisen; traditional views that depict memory as the raw stuff of history no longer produce usable twenty-first-century pasts.[15]

The French historian Pierre Nora's presentation of this conceptual bond, made in the early 1980s, has proved extremely influential to subsequent interpretations. Unlike previous work that had assumed the fundamental compatibility of the two terms, Nora saw history and memory as fundamentally opposed: "At the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it."[16] His contention that this conquest had already occurred in the modern era provided the inspiration for his famous *lieux de mémoire,* or sites of memory, in which the will not to forget was now concentrated rather than dispersed over entire *milieux*, or environments, *de mémoire*, as had once been the case. Historians have since questioned the severe polarity of Nora's argument, and now more commonly portray history and memory as interwoven in dialectic and dynamic ways. Geoffrey Cubitt well captures this spirit: "[W]e can see them as conceptual terms that have constantly interacted with each other, moving in and out of each other, circling each other warily or amorously, sometimes embracing, sometimes separating, sometimes jostling for position on the discursive terrain that is their common habitat."[17]

The authority of memory, for explorers as for other people, often rests upon claims to specific individual experience of some person or phenomenon. However, this univocal construction clashes with the current scholarly understanding of memories as inherently interactional things, as "interpretative reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration."[18] The notion that memories are embedded in specific milieux and webs of relations owes much to the work of Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist who undertook pioneering work on social memory in the 1920s. Halbwachs argued that groups, not individuals, were at the core of remembering, and that people obtain and retain memories in

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[15] Recent examinations include Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 1386-1403; Susan A. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory," *American Historical Review* 102 (December 1997): 1372-85; Allan Megill, "History, Memory, Identity," *History of the Human Sciences* 11 (1998): 37-62; Thomas W. Laqueur, "Introduction," *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000): 1-8; Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000): 127-50. Geoffrey Cubitt thoughtfully sums up this debate in the first chapter of his *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

[16] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 9.

[17] Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 5.

[18] Quoted in C. Lesley Biggs with Stella Stephanson, "In Search of Gudrun Goodman: Reflections on Gender, 'Doing History,' and Memory," *Canadian Historical Review* 87 (2006): 298.

the context of social interaction rather than private contemplation. He developed the idea of "social frameworks of memory" to account for and reflect the patterns of membership in an array of formal and informal groups that together shape what a person remembers and forgets. Halbwachs's work remains a key foundation for current studies on social and collective memory and remembering.[19]

Fresh Canadian historical work on these interpersonal and interpretative relationships of history and memory uses the work of Nora and Halbwachs and their critics, among others, as a base upon which to construct a specifically Canadian context for these activities.[20] The scholars Colin Coates and Cecilia Morgan identify some aspects of Canadian experience that diverge from these European models: the lack of a traditional peasant society in which memory can be unproblematically located, and the early colonial engagement with English and French national histories, as well as local aboriginal histories and memories that have been both appropriated and forgotten in the imaginative creation of a national past. The resultant "multi-layered Canadian historical memories" display specific attributes frequently found in societal debates over history and memory, including conflicts between English and French and Catholic and Protestant viewpoints, the importance of social elites in constructing historical memory, and a widespread popular desire to commemorate the country's past.[21] Engaging these last two points, the discussion throughout this chapter demonstrates the power of both certain intellectual and governmental elites and popular historical discourses to shape, displace, or silence the histories and memories that Douglas and Blanchet wanted to communicate.

Within the ocean of scholarly work on memory, there are two recent lines of insight particularly pertinent to the following analysis. One concerns the refigured relationship between what the historian John Bodnar termed official and vernacular cultural expressions of memory. He framed official expressions as those voiced by societal leaders in order to promote social

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[19] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. F.J. Ditter and V.Y. Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980).

[20] See, e.g., Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); Allan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal's Public Memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Marc James Léger, "Memory into History: Personal Documents for an Age of Franco-Ontarian Reculturation," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 3 (2001): 79-106; Colin Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Biggs with Stephanson, "Gudrun Goodman"; Keith Thor Carlson, "Reflections on Indigenous History and Memory: Reconstructing and Reconsidering Contact," in *Myth and Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact*, ed. John Sutton Lutz (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 46-68; Sean Kheraj, "Restoring Nature: Ecology, Memory, and the Storm History of Vancouver's Stanley Park," *Canadian Historical Review* 88 (2007): 577-612.

[21] Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*, 6-7.

unity, the continuity of existing institutions, and loyalty to the status quo, and vernacular expressions as ones arising from the experience of small communities with local, often autobiographical histories.[22] While Bodnar presented these concepts as distinct, even dissenting from each other, subsequent scholars have emphasized the mutual construction and constitution of official and vernacular memories, as revealed by their research into particular moments and places. For example, Coates and Morgan, in their monograph about historical representations of the heroines Laura Secord and Madeleine de Verchères, confirm that they found official memory informing vernacular memory and vice versa, and that the lines between the practices were both blurred and mutually reinforcing.[23]

Another contention of immediate relevance affirms the impossibility, or at least the insufficiency, of the common heuristic separation in academic writing between a specific representation of memory and its reception or contestation in a wider sphere. Alon Confino notes that historical actors often participate in these various commemorative processes simultaneously, and that these must be understood as intertwined in their effects.[24] As will be seen, Douglas and Blanchet drew upon various official and popular historical records and traditions in the making of their records of the past, and their productions were already conditioned by a knowledge of the ways in which their work was likely to be contested or received.

The less mysterious North

The massive surge in Canadian and American industrial and military activity in the continental North during the Second World War rendered the region of much greater intelligibility, interest, and perceived potential not only to Canadian government officials and scientists, as has been noted, but also to the public. Wartime and postwar academic and popular writers framed the North not only as a region of new political and military import within a national and continental sphere, but also one of great future profit, materially and imaginatively, for Canada.

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[22] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[23] Coates and Morgan, *Heroines and History*, 7-8. See also David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Douglas Seefeldt, "Oñate's Foot: Histories, Landscapes and Contested Memories in the Southwest," in *Across the Continent: Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and the Making of America*, eds. Douglas Seefeldt, Jeffrey L. Hantman, and Peter S. Onuf (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 170-99; Biggs with Stephanson, "Gudrun Goodman."

[24] Confino, "Collective Memory." See also Charles Withers, "Memory and the History of Geographical Knowledge: The Commemoration of Mungo Park, African Explorer," *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004): 316-39.

Governmental press releases directed at Canadian citizens during the war had trumpeted the modernization of the region as a stepping-stone to further economic development. Indeed, the $500 million that had been invested during the war and immediately thereafter in the improvement of the region's transportation and communication facilities had brought its resources much closer to the point of profitable exploitation. This economic theme came to its apex in the 1958 federal election campaign run by the Progressive Conservative prime minister John G. Diefenbaker. His "Northern Vision" presented northern development both as a fundamental Canadian duty and as the key to national growth and prosperity, and evoked a future north of the fifty-fifth parallel filled with new roads, railways, icebreakers, and modern, scientific, and self-governing subarctic and arctic cities and research stations. Nor would the North's human resources go undeveloped: northern health care, educational, and welfare services became a higher federal priority than ever before.

Diefenbaker was swept to power with the largest electoral majority ever witnessed in a Canadian election. This success indicates, to Morris Zaslow, "how the public's consciousness of the North had been heightened by governmental and private activities and publicity ever since the United States had 'discovered' Northern Canada in connection with the Second World War."[25] This powerful public interest in the North was further and variously stimulated throughout the next several decades. Governmental and scientific agencies concerned with the North promoted their work in order to receive the public support necessary to procure larger budgets for more complex programs. Journalists, writers, and artists produced textual, visual, and aural representations of the North, both fictional and non-fictional. Often these creative voices and works reflected upon larger political themes. While the comic-book characters "Dixon of the Mounted" and "Nelvana of the Northern Lights" emerged as Canadian protectors of the northland, the popular writers Farley Mowat and Pierre Berton, both passionate advocates of the North, highlighted the region as a wellspring of postwar Canadian identity.[26]

Mention of Mowat and Berton draws one's notice to a group absent from this field of northern discourse: professional historians. Non-academic historians such as Mowat and Berton, along with their late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century predecessors, presented the British naval explorers and English, Scottish, and French fur trade explorers of the Subarctic and Arctic as some of the original architects of the Canadian nation. This romantic

[25] Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 332.
[26] Sherrill Grace, "From *Nelvana* to Ice Box: Popular Constructions of 'the Arctic,'" *Northern Review* 21 (2000): 22-37; Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

interpretation of their actions reused and stretched northward a pliable narrative framework originally intended to celebrate the deeds of western explorers.[27] However, prior to 1960, the only professional historian to devote consideration to the role of the North in Canadian history, Harold Innis, furnished a very different kind of analysis in his seminal work *The Fur Trade in Canada* (1932). Innis emphasized the interplay of geographical, technological, and economic forces that had driven the expansion of the Canadian fur trade from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, in which individuals were constrained in their responses by inescapable, anonymous, and somewhat deterministic forces.[28] This dehumanized view of history, which had enjoyed strong support among Innis's professional counterparts throughout the thirties and early forties, had begun to pall by the time with which this chapter is concerned. Perhaps partly in response to fascist and communist threats to the integrity of the individual democratic citizen, Canadian historians began to focus once more on the personal, the intimate, and the vivid elements of the past. These new interests combined to produce the resurgence of the political biography genre among professional historians in the 1950s.[29] The form of biography not only vigorously reasserted human agency, but it also brought the scholarship of historians closer to the interests of the reading public.

That public included "amateur" historians such as Douglas, Blanchet, and Stefansson. Generally speaking, "amateurs" had been progressively excluded from the official realm of historical scholarship in light of the discipline's increasing professionalization and specialization. Certainly by 1945, those neither university-trained nor university-employed did not generally enjoy the same scholarly authority accorded to historical researchers within the academy.[30] However, as Donald Wright notes, non-professional historians still played an important role in the gathering of facts, the preservation of documents, and the promotion of past events on Canadian soil. The subject of their work being identified most readily with the communities and

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[27] Janice Cavell, "The Second Frontier: The North in English-Canadian Historical Writing," *Canadian Historical Review* 83 (2002): 364-89; Cavell, "The True Northwest Passage: Explorers in Anglo-Canadian Nationalist Narratives," *Northern Review* 32 (2010): 5-34.

[28] Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing: 1900-1970* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), chapter 4; Cavell, "Northwest Passage," 14-15. Two treatments of Innis's personal and scholarly engagement with northern Canada are Matthew Evenden, "Harold Innis, the Arctic Survey, and the Politics of Social Science during the Second World War," *Canadian Historical Review* 79 (1998): 36-67, and Evenden, "The Northern Vision of Harold Innis," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 3 (1999): 162-86.

[29] Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 160-61, 218-22.

[30] On the early twentieth-century professionalization of history in Canada, see Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, eds., *Creating Historical Memory: English Canadian Women and the Work of History* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), particularly the introduction, and Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

districts in which they lived, these "local historians" were encouraged to provide professional historians "with verified and verifiable facts about their smaller fields and with the most discerning interpretation of these facts as they can offer."[31] The professional historian would then place this detailed, accurate knowledge in larger perspective, assigning it a value in proportion to its importance to national history. He had to guard, however, against the omnipresent possibility of the "ephemeral, insubstantial, and unverifiable reminiscences" that W.S. Wallace, of the University of Toronto, identified as the hallmark of the amateur.[32]

The history of northern Canada was of interest to very few in the postwar period, save some "antiquarians, a few regional specialists, and historians of the fur trade."[33] Even the call of the western historian W.L. Morton, in his presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association in 1960, to consider Canadian history as "a distinct and even a unique human endeavour, the civilization of the northern and arctic lands," garnered little interest.[34] Morton had earlier argued against the hegemonic focus upon central Canada that prevailed in professional historical research, and had instead promoted a conception of the West as a distinct national region, replete with its own political, social, and environmental cultures. Somewhat ironically, as Douglas West demonstrates, Morton's vision of the North was based more upon a popular "rhetoric of national northern greatness" than upon a similarly nuanced understanding of northern Canada.[35] Certainly before 1960, and to a large extent even after that date, the North was not yet part of the official historical remit of the nation, despite its recent enfolding into the academic-industrial-military complex and its introduction to popular southern Canadian culture. By contrast, Douglas, Blanchet, and Stefansson *did* comprehend the North as part of the historical Canadian nation, and explicitly situated their personal and social activities in that region in the early twentieth century as essential to a proper understanding of twentieth-century national history. It is to their commemorative efforts that discussion now turns.

Nascent histories of the North

In the various correspondences that they undertook during their retirement, Douglas and Blanchet enjoyed recalling their past activities in the North and the people they had known,

[31] Quoted in Wright, *Professionalization of History*, 92.
[32] Quoted in ibid., 90-91.
[33] Coates and Morrison, introduction to *For Purposes of Dominion*, 1.
[34] W.L. Morton, "The Relevance of Canadian History," in *Contexts of Canada's Past: Selected Essays of W.L. Morton*, ed. A.B. McKillop (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980), 166.
[35] Douglas A. West, "The Limits of Northern Identity: An Assessment of W.L. Morton's Northern Vision," *Northern Review* 14 (1995): 97.

many of whom were also aging, or had already passed away. Their memories were sometimes tinged with nostalgia and often weighted against the less happy age in which they perceived themselves to live. After reminiscing about his first meeting with Blanchet, Douglas wrote, "So much for 'Acti Labores'—past activities that the Roman philosopher [Cicero] found pleasure in contemplating in later and more troublesome times."[36] Seven years before his death, Blanchet admitted: "I expect that my writing is looking back rather than looking forward from a romantic past to a doubtful present and an unhappy future."[37]

Personal and autobiographical memories of the kind in which Douglas and Blanchet indulged are distinguished primarily by autonoetic, or self-knowing awareness. One feels a sense of personal involvement in the experiences remembered and in the ways in which they are remembered. Yet these kind of memories pale in their transmission, such that they are stripped of their defining autonoetic sensation once they are passed from one mind to another. On a large scale, one generation's vivid memories of personal experience become the general historical knowledge of later generations.[38] Indeed, Douglas's and Blanchet's memories formed the nucleus both of specifically autobiographical projects, and of general historical research projects. These latter undertakings were usually grounded in personal contact with or experience of specific people or events (or their remains) encountered during their own northern fieldwork. In the early 1960s, Blanchet began to compose his autobiography, tentatively entitled "Beyond the Ranges" and, later, "These Fifty Years." It was never published, and remains in typescript in his fonds at the British Columbia Archives.[39] Douglas appears never to have considered writing an autobiography, despite Finnie's protestation that he "keenly regretted your having to spend so much time on household chores when you ought to be working on your memoirs!"[40]

Blanchet's major historical project in his retirement, however, was a book entitled *Search for the North*, which Macmillan published in 1960. Originally named "Airplanes and

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[36] Douglas to Blanchet, 11 October 1945, File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.
[37] Blanchet to Kildare Dobbs, 20 November 1959, File 2, Box 6, Guy Houghton Blanchet fonds, MS 0498, British Columbia Archives (hereafter cited as BCA).
[38] Cubitt, *History and Memory*, 69-70, 122.
[39] Blanchet, "Beyond The Ranges" and "These Fifty Years," unpublished MSS, Boxes 9 and 10, MS 0498, BCA. On the attempted posthumous publication of this document, see John Gray to Don W. Thomson, 10 November 1970; Eileen Blanchet to Finnie, 16 February 1971; Thomson to Finnie, 2 April 1971; Finnie to Thomson, 17 April 1971; all File 16, Volume 9, MG31 C6, LAC.
[40] Richard Finnie to Douglas, 14 October 1946, File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. In the late 1960s, Finnie commenced work on his own autobiography, entitled "You Should Have Been Here Yesterday," but appears never to have progressed beyond an annotated outline of chapters and their projected content. See File 7, Volume 21, MG31 C6, LAC.

Igloos," the narrative recounted his experiences while stationed at Tavane and working for Dominion Explorers, including the widely publicized MacAlpine search and rescue mission that he had coordinated in the autumn of 1929. Throughout his working life and into his retirement, Blanchet also enjoyed researching the locations of old fur trade forts in the Northwest that he had encountered in the course of his surveys on Lake Athabasca and in northern Saskatchewan, among others. Although much of this research never left the manuscript stage, he did publish one article on the history of Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta.[41] Even less of Douglas's historical research made it into print. He retained a lively scholarly interest in the Franklin Search of the mid-nineteenth century, but much of his attention went toward elucidating the early twentieth-century history of non-aboriginal travel in the Great Bear Lake region contemporaneous with his own presence there. He wrote an account of the circumstances surrounding the murders of two Catholic Oblate priests near Great Bear Lake in the pre-World War I period, but thought it unsuitable for publication.[42] Douglas also undertook some research into the travels of the Englishman Cosmo Melvill and his expeditionary companions, including another Englishman named John Hornby, one of Douglas's good friends. Somewhat to Douglas's vexation, and not by his choice, Hornby would become a primary focus of his research efforts throughout the 1950s, as will be detailed in a later section.

Far from undertaking this work in solitude, Douglas and Blanchet were in regular contact with other amateur and professional historians. Chapter 4 demonstrated Douglas's and Stefansson's shared affinity for historical topics of discussion. Douglas also wrote regularly to Clifford Wilson, the editor of *The Beaver*, who had written popular histories of the Hudson's Bay Company before taking up his current post.[43] He and Blanchet both corresponded occasionally with W. Kaye Lamb, a professional historian whose research focused partly on early Canadian fur trade and exploration history. Once the Provincial Librarian and Archivist of British Columbia, Lamb became the fourth Dominion Archivist of Canada in 1946, and the first National Librarian in 1953. He served as the president of many professional associations throughout his career.[44]

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[41] Blanchet, "'Emporium of the North,'" *The Beaver*, Outfit 276 (March 1946): 32-35.

[42] George M. Douglas, "Father Rouvier O.M.I. and John Hornby. The First Mission to the Copper Eskimos," unpublished MS, File 10, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC. On its perceived unsuitability for publication, see Douglas to Stefansson, 2 April and 10 October 1953, MSS 196, RSC; Douglas to Stefansson, 9 March 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA and File 22, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and MSS 196, RSC.

[43] Wilson came from an English family in Montreal and had attended Upper Canada College (a prestigious private boys' school modelled after Eton) and McGill University. Joan Sangster, "*The Beaver* as Ideology: Constructing Images of Inuit and Native Life in Post-World War II Canada," *Anthropologica* 49, no. 2 (2007): 205, fn1.

[44] Biographical information about Lamb may be found in Terry Cook, "An Archival Revolution: W. Kaye Lamb and the Transformation of the Archival Profession," *Archivaria* 60 (2005): 185-234.

In addition to Wilson and Lamb, Douglas also counted as a correspondent and old friend H.H. Langton, the librarian at the University of Toronto and co-editor of the 32-volume *Chronicles of Canada* series. Blanchet exchanged many letters with J.N. Wallace, who was, like himself, an "amateur" historian and a professional surveyor. Wallace had been one of the founding members of the Calgary Historical Society.[45] Like the work of professional historians, Douglas's and Blanchet's historical writing was based partly on research they had undertaken in the National Archives in Ottawa. There, Blanchet had always researched the areas assigned to him to survey before heading out to the field, whilst Douglas pursued his own private archival research on occasion when in Ottawa. Douglas also corresponded with Hudson's Bay Company archivists in Winnipeg and London throughout the 1950s.

The one publication toward which their historical pieces were most consistently directed was *The Beaver*, the Hudson's Bay Company's in-house magazine. In 1956, Douglas termed it "by far the best historical-geographical magazine" of which he knew.[46] Founded in 1920 as a company circular, it became gradually more directed to a general middlebrow readership in the 1930s and 1940s, at the same time newly advertising itself as "a magazine of the North." In the postwar period, it positioned itself as "an influential *National Geographic* style publication offering authentic, scientific images of Canadian history and the North." Joan Sangster has demonstrated that *The Beaver*'s content during this era legitimized the persistent internal colonialism of the North and the superiority of Euro-Canadian culture over that of northern Natives, who "inevitably" required state-directed economic and social modernization.[47] *The Beaver* was both interdisciplinary and open to popular and academic articles. The broadening of its readership, however, had diminished its formerly special character of a repository for records of northern history. This newer, more southerly focus was illustrated vividly in Wilson's comments upon a draft article Blanchet had submitted that dealt with the MacAlpine Search: "I think if the reader knew the Arctic quite well he would appreciate the story, but we have 20,000 readers now, of whom only a small percentage know where such [small northern places] are...."[48]

Nevertheless, Blanchet published a number of articles in *The Beaver* throughout the years, most of which fall into the category of the "colonial and nostalgic picturesque": narratives

[45] For biographical information about Wallace, see Hugh A. Dempsey, "Four Early Alberta Historians," *Alberta History* 45 (Spring 1997): 2-8.
[46] Douglas to Whalley, 1 April 1956, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[47] Sangster, "*The Beaver*," 191.
[48] Clifford Wilson to Blanchet, 29 November 1950, File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA. See also Blanchet to Douglas, 20 February 1955, File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

of action and adventure, accompanied by illustrations of old forts rising majestically out of the wilderness, that conveyed nostalgia for a grand empire of the past.[49] At the request of Wilson, Blanchet also reviewed several books.[50] Although Douglas published very little in *The Beaver*, he often carbon-copied to Wilson letters of his that touched on historical topics, mainly for the latter's private pleasure.[51] "I often asked him to write articles for 'The Beaver,' for which he was so well qualified," Wilson later recalled, "but seldom had any success."[52] Having described the kinds of historical activities in which Douglas and Blanchet were involved, the following analysis of their efforts will draw out the tensions in these activities using a thematic approach. The issues which most characterized their historical research fall into four categories: questions of authority and duty, questions of composition, questions of scale, and questions of audience. All of these matters mingled in their thoughts and underlay—even undermined, at times—their historical work throughout the postwar period.

Exploratory ways of knowing run throughout their correspondence on this subject. By virtue of their first-hand observation of many of the people and events of the early twentieth-century Canadian North, and of what they had learned at one or two removes about their predecessors there, Douglas and Blanchet felt themselves peculiarly well appointed to comment upon and analyze the era in which they had worked, as well as the several eras that had preceded it. Douglas accorded special powers of interpretation to those historians who had also had some kind of personal engagement with the northern environment, and who therefore combined the personas of "scholar and man of action."[53] Meanwhile, Blanchet had often found time, when on his northern surveys, to undertake certain kinds of local historical research that could only be accomplished in the field. He interviewed elderly aboriginal men in order to search their memories of the landscape of former days, and had them act as his guides in the location of ruins of various fur trade forts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Once

[49] Sangster, "*The Beaver*," 199.
[50] Blanchet, "Samuel Black on the Finlay," *The Beaver*, Outfit 286 (Spring 1956): 30-31; Blanchet, review of *The Legend of John Hornby,* by George Whalley, *The Beaver*, Outfit 293 (Spring 1963): 58.
[51] "Wilson says he likes to get my letters so I'll send a cc of this along to him as a relief from his editorial work. He can read this without having to answer it or even to think about it—merely to find in it what amusement it may afford." Douglas to Finnie, 13 February 1954, File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. See also Douglas, "Royal Navy Ships on the Columbia River in 1839," *The Beaver*, Outfit 285 (Autumn 1954): 38-41; Douglas, "Footnotes to the Franklin Search: Beechey Island Cache," *The Beaver*, Outfit 285 (Spring 1955): 48-51.
[52] Wilson to Allan Nevins, 27 May 1958, MSS 196, RSC.
[53] Douglas to Finnie, 21 February 1944 (unsent), File 2, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC. Some professional Canadian historians during this period similarly connected first-hand experience of the wilderness with superior scholarship. Witness, for example, A.R.M. Lower's boast that "I am sure I am a better scholar because I know the bush ... can split wood, make a bough bed, snare a rabbit, run a rapids." Quoted in Grace, *Idea of North*, 48.

these sites were discovered, Blanchet would eagerly examine the traces that remained. [54] J.N. Wallace, though not himself an academic historian, echoed professional appraisals of local historians' value by locating Blanchet's greatest authority in precisely these activities: "[U]se your knowledge as a basis for ACCURATE STATEMENTS .... You have an enormous advantage. ... [I]n the narrow field of accurate details in a small region there may not be a man in Canada so well equipped."[55] Moreover, as Blanchet noted in one letter to Clifford Wilson, the personal expertise that attended such northern activities was rarely questioned: "You do what is so seldom done in narratives of the North... ask for the authority."[56]

Douglas and Blanchet acutely felt their failures in instances where information gathering had been possible but not realized. Despite Blanchet's best efforts, he acknowledged that,

> Unfortunately, it so often happens that when one is in a situation in which he might be able to establish facts he is either too busy or passes points of historical interest without knowledge or appreciation of contributions which he might make by careful investigation and from first hand information of old natives who had been actors at the time.[57]

In letters written both to Blanchet and to Stefansson, Douglas heartily agreed. "I have frequently tried to get historical facts in later life that I should have asked about years previously and then the people who might have given me the facts are all dead," he mused regretfully.[58] Blanchet also felt that, as a privileged recipient of first-hand information, he had a duty to record what he had learned so that future generations would have access to such material: "[I]f one can record something of historical value... one should do it."[59] Noting the rising popular fascination with

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[54] Blanchet, "'Emporium'"; Gwyneth Hoyle, *The Northern Horizons of Guy Blanchet, Intrepid Surveyor, 1884-1966* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2007), 54-55. See also File 1, Box 13, MS 0498, BCA.

[55] J.N. Wallace to Blanchet (emphasis original), c1928, File 1, Box 13, MS 0498, BCA.

[56] Blanchet to Wilson, 3 October 1945, File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA. In a letter written two days prior, Wilson had asked, "As you make some statements which I have not come across before, would you mind giving your authorities for some of them?" Blanchet informed Wilson that many of his conclusions had been reached through correspondence with J.N. Wallace, who had accumulated a great mass of notes from archival documents on the fur trade, and who "took great pains in establishing every name, date, and event." Wilson replied that he certainly knew Wallace to be a reliable historian, thus implicitly accepting Blanchet's claims as truthful. See Wilson to Blanchet, 1 and 10 October 1945, both File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA.

[57] Blanchet to Douglas, 3 February 1958, File 29, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC; see also Blanchet to Douglas, 20 February 1955, File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

[58] Douglas to Stefansson, 20 February 1957, MSS 196, RSC; see also Douglas to Blanchet, 30 January 1958, File 9, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC.

[59] Blanchet to Gray, 12 September 1959, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA. A strong iteration of this preservationist duty can be found in a letter that Richard Finnie wrote in his later years: "I disagree with you about letting the past bury its dead. If that were valid there would be no record of personalities and events. Some of us who have gone places or done things don't write about them, or not enough; and unless there are historians around, a lot of questions remain unanswered. ... I feel that if you have special information about historical events, ... you should try to set the record straight." Finnie to C.H.D. Clarke, 10 March 1978, File 14, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC.

northern Canada, he believed that there might someday be great interest in the northern events that his career had led him to interrogate and to witness.

Unlike their friends Stefansson and Finnie, neither Douglas nor Blanchet wrote for a living. They struggled noticeably with a range of compositional dilemmas as they strove to formulate and prepare for publication their memories and historical research. A major source of inspiration and factual confirmation was the personal northern archives that both men possessed, comprised of books and reports concerning the North, correspondence with northern friends and acquaintances, photographs of northern people and landscapes, and drafts of unfinished or unpublished articles or booklets about the North which they had written. These documents, upon which Douglas and Blanchet based their authority to report on historical conditions, were collectively lodged in the domestic space of each man's study. Descriptions of Douglas's "prodigious" collection are scattered throughout his correspondence:

> I remember saying to Dr. Lamb as a joke that I had quite important 'Archives' of my own at Northcote. A joke, but one with much truth in it, and scarcely an exaggeration in so far as the Mackenzie [River] and its system of great lakes is concerned. And not merely archives in its strict sense but also a library and even museum, not to mention a vast collection of photos I have taken over a period of 25 years.[60]

Two observations may be made about these material bases of northern memory and authority, which were similar in kind, if not in scale, to the Stefansson Library. First, as in the early days of this library, both Douglas's and Blanchet's archives seem to have been liable to falling into striking disarray. Douglas, like Stefansson, often filed correspondence away in the books to which it pertained, thus mingling his epistolary and printed textual collections. He also filled many suitcases with letters from his northern colleagues written over many letters.[61] At periodic intervals, usually when in the midst of some research project, he attempted to put his records into better order. "For about four days, at various times, I have been struggling with a really appalling job of trying to reduce the utter confusion of this little room I call 'The Office' where much of my Northern stuff and the more important books are kept," he wrote in 1955. "I

[60] Douglas to Stefansson, 5 March 1957 (possibly unsent), File 9, Volume 3, MG30 B95, LAC. Fittingly, perhaps as a result of Lamb's and Douglas's many conversations, Douglas's papers and objects were left to the National Archives after his death, and are preserved there to this day. See J.F. Kidd to Richard Finnie, 26 September 1978, File 11, Volume 19, MG31 C6, LAC.

[61] Douglas once joked to George Whalley, about whom more will be said below, that his scattershot archives were like the "6 paper bags of Herr Prof. Teufelsdrockh." He was referring to a character in Thomas Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" (1833-34), Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, from whose six paper bags of fragmentary records was fashioned his biography. Douglas to Whalley, 20 February 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

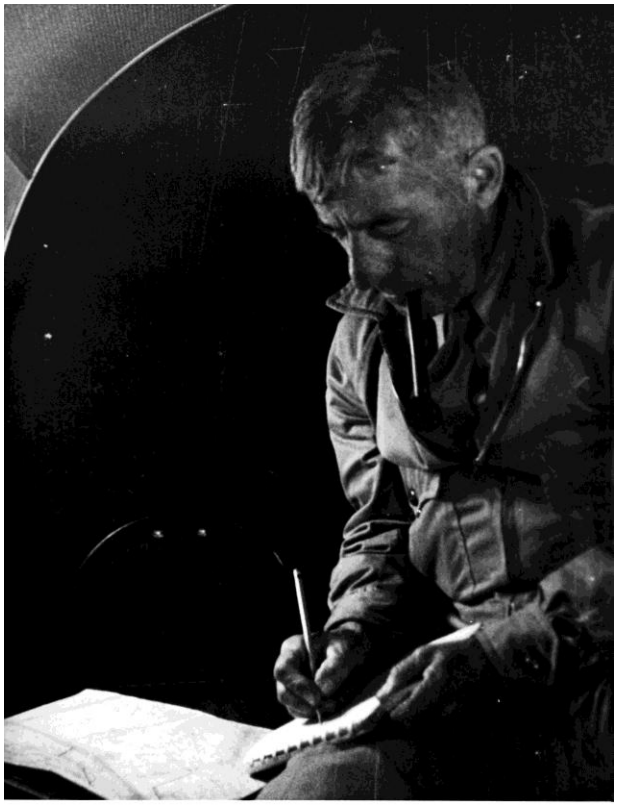

Figure 6.1. Combining practices of exploratory travel and writing, Blanchet takes notes whilst being flown over the northern landscape in 1942. Photo credit: British Columbia Archives / I-68472.

can't say that I can now find anything I want when I want it, but at least I know more or less where to look for it."[62]

In theory, Blanchet's office was arranged so as to ensure a smooth flow of data, wherein items of current import moved from his main desk to his smaller desk, and from there, to "records" in his custom-built bookcases and filing drawers. In practice, he simply made various piles of paper on all available surfaces, including the floor. There were piles for "things I must not forget," "things I may want any time," "things I must have at a moment's notice," "things that I have finished with during the last year or so," and "things still active," all of which accumulated, spilled over, and encroached upon each other. Eventually, Blanchet noted, his wife lost her patience, tidied his office, and disrupted his tenuous organization further.[63] Although these collections contained private accounts of northern testimony and memory unavailable to others, their effective use was only possible if some time and effort were committed to disentangling documents from these eccentrically sorted archives.

[62] Douglas to Whalley, 29 May 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[63] Blanchet, "My Desk," unpublished MS, File 22, Box 13, MS 0498, BCA.

A perusal of these collections could also provoke emotions antithetical to any kind of "disinterested" and "objective" analysis of the past. At their most benign, these archives could instigate nostalgic absorption in memories; at their most malevolent, they could cause serious emotional upset. During one sustained trawl through his old correspondence, Douglas became so immersed in remembrance that the experience affected him on "nervous" grounds. He hinted at the root of this reaction by quoting the lines from Browning that head this chapter. "Instead of getting all this Northern stuff in more orderly shape," he wrote a few days later, "all I have done is to roil it up like a muddy bottom and I'll have to wait until things settle down before saying any more...."[64] Intent on undertaking serious research, memory and history had instead entwined so poignantly as to prevent him from a methodical evaluation of historical events.

Difficulties emerged not only in accessing and reacting to information about the past, but also in converting memory and experience into prose fit for private and public dissemination. As was detailed in chapter 4, Douglas struggled to find time to write amidst the many daily chores to which he was bound. He also suffered from a perfectionism that doomed many of his projects to incompletion and produced overly harsh self-judgments on the pieces that he did finish. He felt that his extensive knowledge of northern history sometimes handicapped his efforts, in that he found it difficult both to be concise and to select the most pertinent evidence to support his contentions.[65]

Meanwhile, Blanchet found it difficult to discard the impersonal, objective style that, as a civil servant, he had been forced to adopt in his reports. He laboured to present himself, his companions, and their exploits in the exciting manner best suited to public consumption. Moreover, he was slightly conscious of a certain dereliction of duty, in that he suspected that he enjoyed recalling the old days more than retelling them. He found tedious the conversion of his diaries into narratives, the successive rounds of changes demanded by editors, and the promotion of his pieces to publishers. It suited him equally well to write for pleasure and his own archives, which he thought, following some exchanges with Kaye Lamb, might one day be enfolded into the National Archives.[66] The difficulties of composing these historical texts were

[64] Douglas to Whalley, 3 October 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA and File 23, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC; Douglas to Whalley, 6 October 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[65] Douglas to Finnie, 29 February 1956, File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[66] For these sentiments, see Blanchet to Finnie, 8 June 1959, 15 January and 20 September 1960, 19 December 1964, and 6 February 1966, all File 8, Volume 19, MG31 C6, LAC; Blanchet to Dobbs, 20 November 1959 and 15 February 1960, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA; Blanchet to Whalley, 1 March 1957 and 2 March 1963, File 3, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. Although Blanchet expressed a wish on several occasions to donate his papers to the

somewhat alleviated by the pleasures of remembering and the hopes that others would someday learn about these early twentieth-century northern experiences.

Questions of scale in these historical activities are to the fore in an intriguing dialectic between the personal and national value of northern experiences and records, which emerged during the period in which Blanchet composed his autobiography. His greatest concern was to strike the right balance between the official, factual recitation of historically significant events in which he had participated and the personal narrative of his days on earth. He eventually adopted a descriptive compromise, in which the manuscript was presented as a personal account of the great changes that had occurred in the Canadian Northwest over the last fifty years.[67] Interest in both small and large scales of northern history is evident throughout Douglas's and Blanchet's letters in the postwar period, as evidenced in their engagement with individual and regional histories.

While the North of the popular imagination was often either barren of life or filled to bursting with the presence of one heroic individual, the region that Douglas and Blanchet remembered was heavily peopled with unforgettable personalities. Their historical writing, to some extent, aimed to introduce their old comrades to a wider audience. Blanchet wrote *Search in the North* partly to commemorate the Inuit who had welcomed him so generously to Tavane, as well as the Dominion Explorers' bush pilots, who had worked under such dangerous conditions that all five of them had been killed on the job in 1930, the year after Blanchet worked alongside them.[68] Within the discursive space of Douglas's and Blanchet's correspondences, this interest in northern personalities crystallizes in a suggestion, made several times by different people over two decades, for the production of a kind of northern prosopography: a collection of short biographies of later-generation northern travellers, almost a multi-yearbook of faces, names, and doings.[69] Although the idea of such a compilation was of undeniable interest to Douglas, Blanchet, and some of their friends, it was never realized.

National Archives, his widow, assisted by his nephew, deposited them instead in the British Columbia Archives in Victoria, BC. Hoyle, *Northern Horizons*, 216.

[67] Blanchet to Dobbs, 28 September 1960, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA; Blanchet to Finnie, 19 December 1964 and 14 February 1966, both File 8, Volume 19, MG31 C6, LAC; handwritten notes on "These Fifty Years," unpublished MS, Box 10, MS 0498, BCA.

[68] Blanchet to Janice Patton, 22 August 1958, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA; Blanchet, *Search in the North* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960), 197.

[69] P.G. Downes to Finnie, June 1942, File 5, Volume 6, MG31 C6, LAC; Douglas to Alyce Finnie, 19 June 1942, File 1, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Blanchet to Douglas, 18 July 1957, File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC; Whalley to Simon Young, 7 January 1963, and Young in reply, 11 January 1963, both File 14, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

Douglas personally doubted that there would be enough general interest in such a project to enable publication.

Of equal, perhaps greater importance to these two men was the desire to read and to write about the history of twentieth-century northern development, in which they had directly participated. They regarded this era as particularly deserving of critical attention because it had been marked by such rapid social and technological revolutions, which they believed that those who had directly experienced were uniquely qualified to narrate. "Good God," P.G. Downes wrote to Finnie, "you are one who has had the opportunity to catch a transition which is comparable to the year 1821."[70] Douglas considered that northern development had been both punctuated and driven by quickly evolving technologies of travel.[71] To express this sense of unsurpassed transformation, Douglas and Blanchet used a convenient shorthand that involved listing the many technologies of travel which had been displaced in quick succession during their living memory of the Northwest. A full expression of this trope appears in one of Blanchet's unpublished manuscripts:

> During this 50 years new inventions came faster than in many previous centuries and Western Canada provided a dramatic stage—a vast virgin country, rapidly occupied and developed by a flood of settlement in which human effort was assisted by modern technical advance as never before on such a great scale. I have made use of rafts and birchbark canoes; of dog sleighs and horse toboggans and packed dogs and horses. Later I had occasion to pioneer the aeroplane and the tractor in the North. The primitive machines which we used are now museum specimens. ... [E]ven the most secret places of the Far North ... may be reached by modern transportation.[72]

More succinctly, and recalling the technologies with which he was most familiar, Douglas wrote about "a period of rapid and revolutionary change in the lives of the Northern people wrought by the internal combustion engine, first the gas-powered 'schooner,' then the outboard engine, and finally to the beginning of the aeroplane."[73] Blanchet perceived the capture of this industrial transformation, seen at first hand, as both an outstanding point of wider interest and relevance in his autobiography and a reason for its publication. Selling the idea of this book to Macmillan, he stressed "the personal contact with the marvelous changes in the West and North," and

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[70] Downes to Finnie, June 1942, File 5, Volume 6, MG31 C6, LAC. The event to which Downes refers was the merger of the two great fur trading companies, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, in what would become Canada. The merger quashed the escalating physical violence and economic competition between the two companies and extended the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly on fur trading to the Arctic and Pacific oceans.

[71] Douglas to Blanchet, 11 February 1958, File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.

[72] Blanchet, "Transportation in the West," unpublished MS, File 3, Box 13, MS 0498, BCA.

[73] Douglas to Stefansson, 15 September 1955, MSS 196, RSC.

affirmed that "no one could live them again as we had to... the pioneer, the surveyor, and the Explorer."[74] He was concerned to record his personal, first-hand knowledge of these unique events for the benefit of future generations.

But for whom exactly, Blanchet often wondered, was he writing? "[W]ho will be interested in our archives?" he asked Douglas in the summer of 1957.[75] Quoting another old surveyor, he told Finnie, "If they want our stories they'll have to hurry up."[76] But did they, whomever they were, actually desire any such thing? Douglas and Blanchet knew that their memories of the North were relished by their circle of northern friends and acquaintances, and anticipated that their records might be of interest to a handful of future scholars. Yet Blanchet suspected correctly that "THEY who purchase and read books may be more important than what the writer has to offer."[77]

Several factors made the general Canadian public a problematic potential audience for their kind of northern historical writing. As Blanchet noted, the world had become a faster, more graphic place, in which "motor cars, jet planes, television, atomic bombs" appeared "to be speeding a world gone mad to destruction...."[78] Public expectations of entertainment had adjusted accordingly. "You know, George," he wrote resignedly, "when one looks back over the last fifty years, there are events and people but... we cannot compete with CRIME COMICS so why try to tell of older and (what we thought were) more adventurous times. ... [L]ife is different and we are no longer heroes in a television rock an' roll age."[79] Blanchet found it difficult to write truthful narratives that maintained the high level of animation, if not titillation, that popular writers had increasingly injected into their representations of the Arctic. "So much well-written trash is published successfully about the North such that one hesitates to enter this field," he admitted to one of Macmillan's editors.[80] At a much earlier date, Douglas, too, had

[74] Blanchet to Dobbs, 28 September 1960, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA.
[75] Blanchet to Douglas, 28 July 1957, File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.
[76] Blanchet to Finnie, 21 September 1960, File 8, Volume 19, MG31 C6, LAC.
[77] Blanchet to Dobbs, 28 September 1960, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA. Finnie commented to Don W. Thomson, the historian pursuing the posthumous publication of Blanchet's autobiography, that "whether or not Guy Blanchet's autobiography is ever published will matter now to only a handful of his friends who survive him and to scholars like yourself who are concerned with the preservation of records of the activities of Canadian explorers." Finnie to Thomson, 17 April 1971, File 16, Volume 9, MG31 C6, LAC.
[78] Blanchet to George Walton, 1 July 1960, File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA.
[79] Blanchet to Douglas, 7 August 1957, File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.
[80] Blanchet to Patton, 22 August 1958, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA. In another letter, Blanchet refers to "a public that is being spoiled by trash, radio and television." Amusingly, he continues, "At this point my wife said 'enough, lots of people like trash, radio and television.'" Blanchet to Gray, 2 October 1959, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA.

deplored "snappy inaccurate stories in smart and jerry-built journalese" about the North.[81] The Arctic was an increasingly choice subject of mainstream journalists and popular writers in the 1940s and 1950s, such that Douglas could sarcastically refer to "The Over Written North."[82]

These various considerations, which demarcated what kind of northern literature was saleable, were active in Macmillan's decision at first to reject Blanchet's manuscript of *Search in the North*. The reviews of Macmillan's readers had been decidedly mixed, and an editor, Jack Gray, explained the interacting factors in their final judgment:

> [T]he book is transparently honest, modest, and authoritative, but these qualities alone are not enough. A spate of books in the past thirty years have given the general reader a feeling of familiarity with Arctic conditions and Eskimo life, so that only the highly dramatic narrative will claim attention. This quality you have refused to fake, and indeed the frequent hazards of your situation are deliberately played down. ... In spite of these weaknesses we would have voted for the book if there had not been so much Arctic material just recently, or if it had not been pitched in such a determinedly minor key.[83]

However, almost one year later, Gray wrote once more to Blanchet, wondering if the manuscript was still available. "I think you know that I had great regrets about the decision we made—and some doubts," he confessed.[84] Extant records suggest that George Douglas may have had something to do with Macmillan's resumed interest. A few months before the book's release, Blanchet wrote cryptically to Finnie that there was "a bit of a story" involving Douglas, Gray, and some editorial revisions he had been asked to make.[85] Douglas's account of the circumstances, much more forthright, radiates with hurt:

> Guy has written an account of the MacAlpine search and rescue I don't care to say anything beyond these facts. MacMillan's (publishers) 'reader,' gave it 'thumb's down [sic].' Jack Gray, MacMillan's manager at my request overlooked this and published, to my personal regret. I don't think Guy knew this? Anyway he did not even send me a copy! Let this speak for itself.[86]

Neither of these testimonies, one suspects, contains the whole truth. Nor is it known whether Douglas ever resumed friendly relations with Blanchet before his death in 1962. The production of northern knowledge could produce schisms between people as well as strengthen their relationships.

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[81] Douglas to Finnie, 19 June 1941, File 2, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[82] Douglas to Finnie, 2 January 1956, File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.
[83] Gray to Blanchet, 16 September 1958, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA.
[84] Gray to Blanchet, 26 August 1959, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA.
[85] Blanchet to Finnie, 15 January 1960, File 8, Volume 19, MG31 C6, LAC.
[86] Douglas to Finnie (emphasis original), 20 July 1960, File 6, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

Closing this discussion, this incident vividly illustrates the personal and emotional investments in these sometimes unpublishable northern historical productions, based both on individual memory and historical research, that Douglas and Blanchet pursued in their later years. Their expertise both rested upon and was constructed so as to emphasize the extensive, subjective, and positioned nature of their knowledge; in travelling through the North, and in having seen and experienced certain things, they were qualified to speak about them. This is a classic model of exploratory (and, indeed, fieldworking and travelling) authority. In order to demonstrate how the aforementioned issues of authority, composition, scale, and audience interpenetrated and intersected in practice, two episodes that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s will now be considered: Stefansson's attempt "to save for history the knowledge and wisdom of George M. Douglas," and Douglas's own unofficial collaboration with a Canadian professor of English, George Whalley, on a biography of the former's deceased friend, John Hornby.[87]

"Alas for those who never sing…!"

In the 1950s, while writing his own autobiography in the wake of the *Encyclopedia Arctica*'s collapse, Stefansson made a series of interventions designed to preserve the personal and historical knowledge of his friend, George Douglas. Since Douglas seemed uninterested in writing memoirs, Stefansson considered that his richest productions were, in fact, his lengthy letters. "Although I have had many long-continued correspondences with important northern figures," he wrote to Douglas, "I doubt that any one of them excells yours in value, particularly in historical importance." One of Stefansson's earliest suggestions for their preservation built on this very strength. He proposed "going back to [their] first exchange of letters and binding them, or otherwise gathering them, into volumes, arranging everything chronologically."[88] There was no doubt in his mind that these documents were of more than personal interest. They were of national value as "Canadian history and biography," as well as being of more specialized interest as "important source material for the history of the middle Canadian subarctic."[89]

Accordingly, Stefansson felt that it was their duty both to preserve as much of this first-hand knowledge as possible, and to do so in a fashion that would enable its easy use by scholars at a later date. "[T]he historical value of the several dozen letters of yours in my files is great. But will anyone ever use them in a way to share them with the reading public or even, as well-

[87] The quotation serves as the title of Stefansson to Allan Nevins, 19 May 1958, MSS 196, RSC.
[88] Stefansson to Douglas, 12 March 1954, File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and MSS 196, RSC.
[89] Stefansson to Douglas, 27 February 1957, MSS 196, RSC; Stefansson to Douglas, 12 March 1954, MSS 196, RSC.

handled manuscript material, with research historians? This has occupied me to distraction...." he admitted.[90] In a letter carbon-copied to W. Kaye Lamb, the Dominion Archivist, and to one of Kaye's colleagues at the newly-minted Canadian Museum of Human History, Stefansson suggested that Canadian archivists and curators should collaborate with elderly northerners in order to preserve their memories: "There is a new world in the north and the men who saw it unveiled and did the unveiling are passing off the stage, with their lines unspoken. Those not yet off should write their lines for Archives or speak them for the Museum."[91] Nothing seems to have come from this suggestion, but it served as a precursor to Stefansson's boldest gambit in this direction, made the following year.

In the spring of 1958, Stefansson wrote to Allan Nevins, who, as a history professor at Columbia University in New York City, had established the first institutionalized oral history program in the United States ten years earlier. Stefansson described Douglas's personal situation with regard to history-making: Douglas wrote with difficulty but spoke well, he was disinclined to write books or articles but wrote wonderful letters, and his knowledge about the Great Bear and Great Slave Lakes was immense. "How can we save for history," he pleaded, "and for every sort of knowledge, (a) his letters that he has written and (b) the letters that he has not written—which is why I was reminded of: 'Alas for those who never sing, And die with all the music in them.' How can we save George Douglas for history?"[92] Nevins was greatly interested, but he was also unable to send an assistant to Ontario to conduct the requested interviews. Could someone else be found, he wondered—"a librarian, a college teacher, a minister, perhaps, or anybody else with a trained mind, tact, patience, and integrity...."?[93]

In his reply to Nevins, Stefansson outlined the merits of three people who might be able to assist in this project—W. Kaye Lamb, who knew Douglas, lived not far away from him, and had numerous friends in common, as well as the resources of the Government to command; Richard Finnie, an old friend almost as knowledgeable about the North as Douglas; and Clifford Wilson, who, as the new director of the Glenbow Foundation in Calgary, might be persuaded to

[90] Stefansson to Douglas, 27 February 1957, MSS 196, RSC.
[91] Ibid. The museum is today part of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. In an exchange of letters the previous year with Stefansson, Trevor Lloyd had also suggested that the Archives might be persuaded to record Douglas's oral reminiscences, or if not the Archives, then perhaps either the Canadian Social Science Research Council or the Arctic Circle. The latter was a group of Arctic scientists and civil servants based in Ottawa that met to socialize and to hear news and reports regarding recent arctic fieldwork. Lloyd to Stefansson, 24 October 1953, MSS 196, RSC.
[92] Stefansson to Allan Nevins, 14 May 1958, MSS 196, RSC. The quotation is from Oliver Wendell Holmes's poem "The Voiceless" (1858).
[93] Nevins to Stefansson, 16 May 1958, MSS 196, RSC.

help preserve Douglas's knowledge of northwestern Canadian history.[94] All three men received carbon copies of the letter, and Stefansson composed an additional note to Lamb, sensing that he was Stefansson's "brightest hope" with respect to carrying out the task. "From previous correspondence I know that you already appreciate that the northern and mid-northern frontier of Canada, now in the forefront of imagination through the northward development program of the Diefenbaker administration, is personified by George Douglas of Lakefield," he wrote. Moreover, Douglas could serve as a "test case" in the oral preservation of frontier history, which, in Stefansson's view, involved "getting hold of both documents and memories before our central characters pass off the stage."[95]

Both Lamb and Wilson, in their replies to Nevins and Stefansson, concurred, either implicitly or explicitly, that Douglas had unique information of import to historians. "I quite agree that something should be done soon along these lines," Wilson responded, "because Mr. Douglas has a great deal of specialized knowledge on the North...."[96] However, both also affirmed that this history could only be preserved if special attention was paid to the personal dimensions of knowledge transmission. Lamb insisted that it was essential to find "a fully informed interviewer who can coax out of a person the special knowledge tucked away in his memory." That person had to be Douglas's equal in his expertise in northern matters, and Lamb thought that one or two people in the federal Department of Northern Affairs might be suitable.[97] Clifford Wilson, meanwhile, emphasized the qualities inherent in the character of the interviewee, rather than that of the interviewer: "I don't know whether you realise that [Douglas] is very deaf and it would be a pretty wearing business interviewing him, if indeed he were willing to be interviewed. I think, given a sympathetic interviewer, he would probably cooperate, but he can't abide the ordinary newspaper reporter who knows not Joseph."[98] With much experience both of amateur and professional historical research, Lamb and Wilson underlined how redoubtably personal were the set of transactions that occurred during this kind of history-making.

Despite Wilson's warning that Douglas "is a pretty old man now and if anything is to be done it should be done quickly," no one seemed willing to assume personal responsibility for the

[94] The Glenbow Foundation was created in 1954 by the philanthropist Eric L. Harvey. One of its main mandates was to collect and preserve textual and material items pertaining to the history and culture of western Canada.
[95] Stefansson to Lamb, 20 May 1958, MSS 196, RSC.
[96] Wilson to Nevins, 27 May 1958, MSS 196, RSC.
[97] Lamb to Stefansson, 30 May 1958, MSS 196, RSC.
[98] Wilson to Nevins, 27 May 1958, MSS 196, RSC.

preservation of Douglas's memories and knowledge.[99] The scheme seems to have been quietly forgotten. Stefansson's one subsequent attempt several months later to resurrect institutional interest, this time that of the Wenner-Gren Foundation and of Dartmouth Library, in Douglas's papers also led nowhere.[100] Nor did Stefansson ever find the time to bind their correspondence together, as he had once suggested. Yet he continued to feel ever more strongly that a sense of historicity and importance pervaded their textual exchanges. As he wrote to Douglas in 1959, "I always—or at least often—feel as if I were engraving a scroll of Canada's history when I write to contribute to our file of exchanges of how things were in the first and second decades of that century."[101] Although Stefansson's estimate of the import of Douglas's knowledge had been confirmed by the three historians with whom he had been in contact, his attempt to provoke them into a more active and professional preservation of this individual fund of information was ultimately unsuccessful.

The writing of John Hornby

"So long as Hornby was alive," Douglas grumbled in a letter to Stefansson in 1955, "we were not obliged to think of him. This happy immunity ceased with his inevitable death by starvation, and every once in a while for the last 30 years I am under the necessity of writing long letters describing just what he really was like in contradiction of what he was supposed to be."[102] The target of Douglas's latest attempt to set the record straight was George Whalley, an English professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Several years earlier, Whalley had written a radio drama performed on CBC Radio about Hornby's demise in the central Arctic barrens in the mid-1920s. He now wished to undertake further research into Hornby's life, and, in 1954, had contacted Douglas, as Hornby's closest living friend, with this purpose in mind. Although the following discussion aims mainly to analyze the dialectical efforts of Douglas and Whalley to

[99] Ibid. As Wilson wrote in this letter, "Of the three people Stefansson suggests as possible interviewers, I personally feel that Richard Finnie would be the best bet. Kaye Lamb, as Dominion Archivist, National Librarian and President of the Canadian Historical Association, already has his hands full and, speaking for myself, I have just taken over the directorship of the Glenbow Foundation and so I am exceptionally busy learning the ropes, as well as carrying out a multiplicity of duties." There is no record of Finnie having responded to Stefansson's letter on this matter. See also Finnie to Kidd, 5 September 1978, File 11, Volume 19, MG31 C6, LAC.
[100] Stefansson to Douglas, 16 November 1958, MSS 196, RSC.
[101] Stefansson to Douglas, 8 February 1959, MSS 196, RSC.
[102] Douglas to Stefansson, 9 March 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA and File 22, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and MSS 196, RSC.

adjudicate Hornby's life and his place in a greater northern and Canadian history, one cannot fully understand the nuances of their task without some knowledge of Hornby himself.[103]

Born in 1880 into an upper-class English family from Cheshire, Hornby had found the life of a country gentleman stultifying. He sought escape as a young man in passage to Canada, where he wound up working in the Edmonton area for a time in the first decade of the new century. Having first entered northern Canada in 1907 as part of the expedition of Cosmo Melvill, a fellow Englishman, he spent most of the succeeding 20 years in that region. He trapped, traded, and made some quasi-scientific observations, but he was inexpert at all these tasks. An eccentric, erratic and quixotic, a solitary and contradictory person, he could be generous, humorous, and kind, particularly to women. Legends, aided and abetted by his artful silences and voluble speech, grew up around him. Most concerned his famed toughness, his great feats of endurance, and his ability to survive winter after winter in the North with what most northerners considered inadequate food and shelter. Living as he did, many thought his death inevitable. Its tragedy arose most from his decision to take two young men, one of whom, Edgar Christian, was his seventeen-year-old cousin, into the North on what would be his last journey there. Having missed the migration of caribou through the Barrens, all three of them starved to death on the banks of the Thelon River in the spring of 1927.

Douglas would always regret his absence from Toronto at the time that Hornby and Christian had paused there in 1926 on their way west, hoping to see him. He believed that he could have convinced Hornby to adopt a safer mode of travel, such as joining a party of surveyors that Blanchet was leading into the subarctic that same season, and thereby saved the boy's life. Moreover, he blamed Christian's parents for their inability to realize that Hornby was a dangerous and therefore unsuitable travelling companion for their child's first trip into the wilderness.[104] It was not surprising, then, that when Whalley began to make approaches to his and Douglas's mutual friends as a prelude to contacting Douglas himself, he found that Douglas

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[103] The most authoritative work on Hornby indeed remains George Whalley, *The Legend of John Hornby* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962). See also Lawrence Millman's introduction to a new edition of Malcolm Waldron's semi-fictional *Snow Man: John Hornby in the Barren Lands* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), vii-xviii. Popular interest in Hornby has been revived recently by a short biography of him in Pierre Berton's final book, *Prisoners of the North* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2004), and by his appearance in Elizabeth Hay's novel *Late Nights on Air* (2007). The latter book won that year's Giller Prize; in so doing, it rose to the top of the Canadian bestseller list. A thorough analysis of textual representations of Hornby in the eighty-some years since his death may be found in C.M. Sawchuk, "The Myth of John Hornby" (B.A. Hon. diss., University of Alberta, 2005).

[104] Douglas to Mrs. "Happy" Bonnell, 19 October 1953, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA; Douglas to Whalley, 14 April 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA; Whalley, *John Hornby*, 260. The censuring of Christian's parents is a frequent theme in Douglas's large correspondence on Hornby.

maintained "a conspiracy of silence" surrounding the subject of Hornby.[105] Upon first hearing of Whalley's intentions, Douglas advised Whalley that he was not available for consultation on the subject of Hornby, that his house was closed to visitors at the present, and that he should not pursue this research. He eventually relented on the first two counts, and Whalley was able to visit him at Northcote on 9 May 1954.[106] Douglas seems to have been impressed by his encounter with Hornby's would-be biographer. He termed him "an unusually fine high grade man," and thereafter allowed him access to his memories and documents concerning Hornby.[107]

Whalley consulted Douglas frequently by letter and paid him many visits over the next eight years as he researched and wrote his biography on Hornby. The younger George later remembered these occasions fondly: "Once George was satisfied that I was not making capital of the material ... he was most generous, helpful, and patient. I felt it a great privilege that he would let me come to Northcote, sometimes for two or three days on end, and just talk and reminisce."[108] To Whalley's surprise, as Douglas travelled mentally into the past, the years that lined his face and frame physically dissipated, as though he had sipped a potion of youth: "[A]s he talked, and the day of our first meeting grew on, ... Douglas became by indistinguishable stages younger—thirty years, forty years...."[109] Their conversations and exchanges of letters reveal that concerns regarding authority, composition, scale, and audience emerged during the course of this research as they did in Douglas's historical and commemorative actions more generally. Douglas's reservations and Whalley's consolations will be examined here in coherent summations of their general positions, rather than in their original scattered form across hundreds of pages of documents and over the space of nearly a decade.

To begin, Douglas believed that Whalley, who had never been to the North, had neither the *situated* nor the *personal* knowledge necessary to undertake an accurate analysis of Hornby. "Whalley has put [in] an enormous amount of work on Hornby, but he doesn't know the country, nor the class of people who have helped to create the Hornby Myth, and therefore

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[105] The term was used by Douglas's sister-in-law, whom Whalley met at a party not long after his research into Hornby began. George Whalley, unpublished memorandum, 26 February 1954, File 30, Box 3, Location 1032c, QUA.

[106] Douglas to Mrs. "Happy" Bonnell, 19 October 1953, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA; Whalley, "Visit to George Douglas 9 May 1954," unpublished memorandum, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

[107] Douglas to Finnie, 15 December 1954, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

[108] Whalley to Finnie, 10 August 1969, File 8, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. The letter continues, "Sometimes he would withdraw (without intending to do so) and would find his papers in such confusion that he couldn't locate something I particularly wanted; and Kay [Douglas's wife] was immensely helpful and tactful in helping me not to seem importunate. I had an immense admiration for George, and hope he knew that."

[109] Whalley, *John Hornby*, 3.

can't evaluate evidence," Douglas asserted in a letter to Stefansson.[110] Certain people—Hornby himself, his one-time travelling partner Charles Critchell-Bullock, and many of the northern trappers—could not be trusted to tell the truth about Hornby, Douglas believed. Moreover, he warned Whalley to determine the provenance of a person's expertise on Hornby carefully. Hornby presented himself very differently in England, in southern Canada, and in the North, and Douglas thought that only the handful of people who had known him in all three milieux were able to assess his character, in all its complexity, properly.[111]

To his credit, Douglas realized that these precautions may have seemed absurd, and he clarified that he did not mean to cast aspersions on Whalley's general evaluative abilities. He wrote of Whalley's "very natural resentment of my saying you don't know the country, nor the value of much of the evidence concerning [Hornby]. ... I don't doubt your wide experience of men and manners—you are well able to comment on the kind of men you mention. The essential point is that Hornby wasn't in the least like them."[112] In light of Whalley's lack of personal contact with Hornby, Douglas guided him to those people whom he considered, from his own knowledge, to have the most reliable first-hand memories and the widest experience of Hornby and his strange personality.

Another set of Douglas's concerns revolved around Whalley's presentation of Hornby. He communicated these worries obliquely by quoting a phrase from Shakespeare's *Othello*: "Nothing extenuate/Nor set down aught in malice"[113] (5.2.342-343). Having read Whalley's first full-length essay on Hornby, Douglas disagreed with his inclusion of many of the common myths about Hornby's life, even if they were intended only as a frame for the narrative statements of fact that followed. "Rien que le vrai," Douglas criticized Whalley. "[Y]ou have created the usual false impression that he was a kind of a superman of Northern travel which is remote from the truth."[114] Partnered with this extenuation was Douglas's fear of perpetrating malice, one that

[110] Douglas to Stefansson, 27 July 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA and MSS 196, RSC.
[111] Douglas to Whalley, 25 July 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA and File 11, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC; Douglas to Finnie, 27 January 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[112] Douglas to Whalley, 5 August 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[113] Douglas to Whalley, 25 July 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[114] Ibid. Douglas was commenting upon a draft of an article originally commissioned by *Maclean's*, but which Whalley published instead in the *Cornhill* several years later. His criticism was likely aimed at passages such as the following: "Stories were told of him a young man working with the railway gangs around the Yellowhead, how he would go hatless in winter, and barefoot if need arose; and how, when he was at Onoway, he would frequently run the forty-odd miles to or from Edmonton, had once trotted fifty miles beside a horse, and on another occasion ran 100 miles from Edmonton to Athabaska Landing in under twenty-four hours for a wager of a bottle of whisky (although he was not a drinking man)." Whalley, "In the Land of Feast or Famine: The Legend of John Hornby," *The Cornhill,* no. 1010 (Spring 1957): 192.

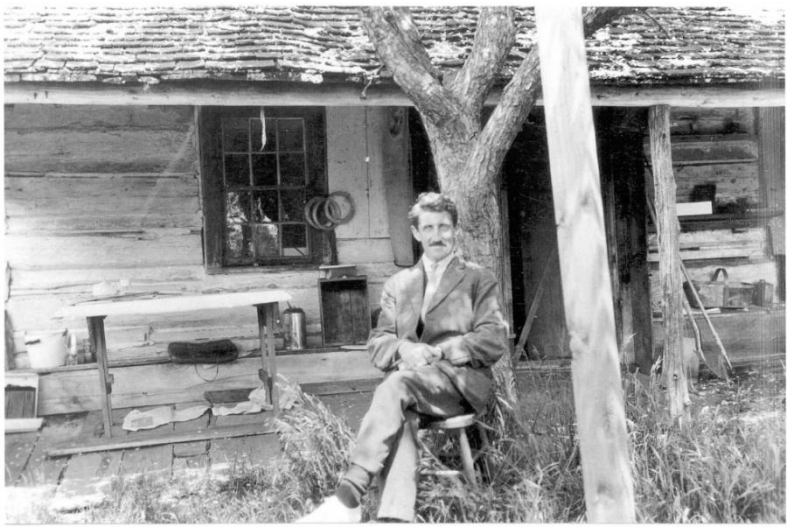

Figure 6.2. John Hornby poses in front of the Tool House on a visit to Northcote during the early 1920s. Credit: Queen's University Archives / George Whalley fonds.

had dated back to his initial misgivings about Whalley's project. He told Whalley plainly that "if you did write an honest account of Hornby other people would be hurt especially the parents of Edgar Christian. And since it is at present impossible to write an honest biography why confirm the Hornby Myth (as Stefansson rightly calls it) with a dishonest one?"[115] He considered it would be difficult, if not impossible, to write a truthful yet benign assessment of Hornby's life while some of the people most directly concerned were still alive.

Issues of scale and audience also pepper Douglas's evaluations of the project. He and Blanchet believed that Hornby was an undeserving and inappropriate subject for a serious, full-length biographical study, given that he had not played any role in the advancement of industry or civilization in the early twentieth-century North. "When one thinks of the notable characters who contributed to building the Canadian North," Douglas opined, "why bother with a joke like Hornby?"[116] From the beginning, he urged Whalley to select a more obviously commendable subject, such as Blanchet. In later years, Finnie, among others, would express their deep regret that Whalley had not chosen to write about Douglas instead.[117]

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[115] Douglas to Whalley, 21 April 1954, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

[116] Douglas to Whalley, 6 January 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. Blanchet agreed with this assessment; see Blanchet to Douglas, 18 July 1957, File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC. Douglas's friend P.G. Downes tried to explain the mindset of Douglas and his friends on this subject more clearly to Whalley: "What they resent, and reasonably is the exaggerated exploitation of virtues and accomplishment in which they knew Hornby to be, by honest standards of excellence, totally inadequate." Downes to Whalley, 31 May 1955, File 20, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

[117] Recommendations of Blanchet as a subject may be found in Douglas to Whalley, 21 April 1954; Whalley, "Visit to George Douglas"; Douglas to Whalley, 15 December 1954; all File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. Finnie's regrets may be found in, e.g., Finnie to C.H.D. Clarke, 31 January 1976, File 14, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to Mrs. Gordon Mallory, 14 June 1978 and 6 April 1980, File 7, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to

Douglas was also unconvinced that the general public would actually show any interest in Hornby. "[S]ome of the facts [Whalley] has collected are of great interest to me but to who else now?" Douglas wondered.[118] Yet, given the lively state of oral legend about Hornby that Whalley was beginning to uncover, Douglas's characterization of Hornby's "chief mission in life ... as providing some of his friends who really knew him & his 'milieu' with funny stories to tell each other" seems somewhat naive.[119] It was clear that many people who had travelled in the North, at least, found Hornby a fascinating topic of discussion. Douglas believed that there were also dangers associated with writing about Hornby: someone who had actually known Hornby in the North might well publicly "de-bunk" any account that presented Hornby as some kind of "superman of the North."[120] Moreover, northerners, as Blanchet had once noted, tended to be very critical of Northern books. Authors, particularly those without northern experience, had therefore to be overwhelmingly careful on matters of fact. [121] Here one comes full circle in returning to issues of authority. Although artificially separated here for the sake of clarity, these categories of criticism, in practice, often mingled and merged at both general and specific sites of contention.

Whalley answered Douglas's concerns in both word and deed, as is evident in the preparation and reception of his book, *The Legend of John Hornby* (1962). His solution to the problem of authority lay in painstaking research:

> I should like to take into account all factual material, whether published or in manuscript, that was relevant to the subject and that I could secure permission to use. ... The more manuscript material one had access to—journals, letters, memoirs, and the like—the less one would be tempted to interpose uncontrolled interpretations of one's own. My aim is to produce something authoritative and minutely faithful; to do that, I am prepared to spend a good deal of time.[122]

To compensate for his lack of personal experience with northern characters and environments, he assiduously pursued and scrutinized public records, official governmental files, financial and

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Kay Douglas, 3 July 1978, File 14, Volume 8, MG31 C6, LAC; Finnie to R.H. Cockburn, 23 May 1983 (and Cockburn in reply, 31 May 1983), File 5, Volume 6, MG31 C6, LAC.

[118] Douglas to Finnie, 22 May 1955, File 5, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC. See also Douglas to Downes, 6 June 1955, File 5, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC; Douglas to Erling Porsild, 8 June 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA; Douglas to Blanchet, 14 July 1957 and Blanchet in reply, 18 July 1957, File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC. This theme is also present in Douglas's reactions to earlier attempts to revive Hornby as a historical figure of interest; see, e.g., Douglas to Finnie, 11 October 1945, File 17, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC and File 3, Volume 7, MG31 C6, LAC.

[119] Douglas to Whalley, 26 January 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

[120] Douglas to Whalley, 2 August 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA and File 23, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.

[121] Blanchet to Winifred Eayrs, 29 January 1960, File 2, Box 6, MS 0498, BCA.

[122] Whalley to Douglas, 16 April 1954, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

legal documents, maps and aerial survey photographs, familial remembrances, and the correspondence of many of Hornby's friends and acquaintances, as well as conducting virtual or concrete interviews with many of these people.[123] In a comment reminiscent of the current vogue for political biography, one reviewer wrote that Whalley retraced Hornby's movements "with a thoroughness usually reserved for statesmen or rulers."[124] While the abundance of documentation in the book irritated some reviewers from the general public, it produced an atmosphere of deep veracity in the narrative that pleased many northerners who read it.[125] As one trapper commented, "You wrote Hornby's life as he lived it. It is regrettable some of the lives of others could not be depicted so correctly."[126] The clear interest in the book, as gauged by the correspondence that Whalley received from northerners and other captivated readers, seems to negate Douglas's prediction of a too-small readership.

When addressing Douglas's initial unwillingness to cooperate in this project, Whalley also hastened to clarify that he would never publish material that would cause others pain, and gave Douglas his word on this matter:

> I can assure you that I have no intention of hurting anybody, and would be the last person to write—let alone publish—anything of a scandalous nature. ... If in the course of discussion, or in examining documents, I were to find that it was impossible for any reason to give a faithful portrait of [Hornby], I should then postpone or terminate my plans....[127]

Furthermore, addressing matters of scale, he outlined the wider benefits to northern and Canadian history that he anticipated would accrue from his detailed study of Hornby. His work would produce a more correct understanding of the history of human endeavour generally in the Canadian North, including those events in which Douglas, Blanchet, and Stefansson had themselves been involved:

> [Hornby] is a person who has become the centre of a variety of stories, now hopelessly garbled. In the end these distorted stories reflect unfavourably upon Hornby's friends, associates, and contemporaries and blur (in the popular mind at any rate) the picture, not only of Hornby, but of the early explorations in the Canadian North. Unfinished symphonies and uncontrolled speculation have a

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[123] Whalley, *John Hornby*, xiii-xiv, 3-4.
[124] Morris Zaslow, "Local and Regional, 1," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1963-64): 471.
[125] Examples of reviews in which complaints about overdocumentation were made include George Bowering, "Hero Without Motive," *Canadian Literature* (1963): n.p.; K.S., "Explorer in the Tundra," *Irish Independent*, 16 February 1963; Rear-Admiral Sir William Jameson, "Man of the Forest," *The Irish Times*, 23 February 1963; all File 24, Box 2, Location 5043, QUA.
[126] Fred J. Peet to Whalley, 16 June 1963, File 6, Box 3, Location 1032c, QUA. See also Whalley to Simon Young, 7 January 1963; Whalley to John Gray, 10 January 1963; both File 14, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[127] Whalley to Douglas, 16 April 1954, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

> fatal appeal for some minds; and the best way of getting rid of the penumbra of half-truth and untruth is to provide an accurate record.[128]

As a result of his extensive research, Whalley was also able to produce, as a background to Hornby's endeavours, one of the first authoritative records of early twentieth-century northern history, in the judgments of some of his informants and readers. Indeed, this aspect of the book proved the most exciting to Douglas and Blanchet. In the early stages of Whalley's research, Blanchet wrote to Douglas, "It is to be hoped that out of his researches something worth while will emerge in the historical background of Northern exploration."[129] This hope was amply fulfilled, as Blanchet wrote in a review of the book six years later. Whalley had not only produced an authentic account of Hornby's life, but he had written well and with integrity "of the people with whom Hornby was associated and of the background—the little-known North."[130] Douglas likewise confirmed that one of Whalley's earlier manuscripts was "of great value as a study for a book about the North."[131] He had declined too much in health by the time of the book's publication, however, to offer a critical assessment of the final product.[132] In addition to the informal reviews in letters that Whalley received, those in print also recognized the author's contribution to northwestern Canadian history. "Mr. Whalley is best as a historian," George Bowering contended, "particularly when he turns his attention to a sweeping description of the prairies and the Northwest Territories at the beginning of this century."[133] An editor at Whalley's British publisher, John Murray, confirmed the opinions of reviewers: "[W]e were all trying to see ways of getting more general description of travel by early pioneers into the Hornby weren't we? This interests people a lot."[134]

The Legend of John Hornby was arguably Douglas's greatest single contribution to northern Canadian historical literature. It is a somewhat ironic legacy, as Douglas had not wanted to publish anything about Hornby himself, and had indeed rejected several previous

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[128] Whalley to Lionel Douglas, 3 January 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[129] Blanchet to Douglas, 18 July 1957, File 20, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.
[130] Blanchet, review of *The Legend of John Hornby* by Whalley.
[131] Douglas to Whalley, 3 October 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA and File 23, Volume 2, MG30 B95, LAC.
[132] "You will be sorry to hear, I know, that in the last few months George Douglas has failed very much. ... When I went to Lakefield to take him a copy of the book in November he recognized me only for the first few seconds of our encounter and then withdrew, quite happily, to the spacious silence that he has for a long time intermittently visited." Whalley to Blanchet, 10 January 1963, File 3, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. See also Whalley to Finnie, 10 August 1969, File 8, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[133] Bowering, "Hero Without Motive."
[134] Simon Young to Whalley, 11 January 1963, File 14, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. The assumption at Macmillan also seems to have been that a key interest of the book lay in its historical, topographical, and national import. See Whalley to Jock Murray, 25 January 1961, File 16, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

opportunities to do so.[135] However, Whalley was forthright about the quantity and quality of the assistance that Douglas had rendered. Dedicating the book to him "with admiration, and in the name of friendship," Whalley acknowledged in the first sentence of the preface that "George Douglas has contributed so much in his conversations and letters and from his collection of documents that the book is about half his."[136] Douglas and Blanchet are prominent characters in the narrative, the former so much so that one is tempted to name this book an unofficial and partial biography of Douglas as well. In this book, too, surely lies the root of the tendency of later historians and writers to yoke Douglas and Hornby together so consistently.[137]

The book may be considered partly Douglas's not only in fact, but also in spirit. It is infused with his perspective on northern landscapes and histories, which has been characterized as a romantic and intimate kind of colonial sentimentality. Moreover, it speaks to the audience with whom he was always most concerned, never more than in the many letters he wrote: his fellow non-indigenous northern travellers, explorers, and residents. The book espoused, as few other northern books did at that time, a determinedly populated vision of the historical North. Whalley depicted the region predominantly as "a country where people lived and have lived." The opening sentence dispels a favourite myth of exploration in striking fashion: "Fifty or sixty years ago, a man travelling by canoe and on foot in the North-West Territories could be certain of very little except that wherever he went others had been before." This northern environment vibrates and hums, like Douglas's correspondence network, with the constant passage of information down a web of human relations embedded intimately within the ground:

> Once [a man] had made his way into the [north] country and committed his life there—if only for a time—he would find that he had moved into the company of people as yet unknown to him although, living at a great distance from him, they already knew about him; for word travels quickly across the open places and nothing worth knowing remains unknown for long. He would also find his life reverberating at times to the echo of other lives whose history was obscure and dark and to be guessed at only from allusive evidence as though from the dim traces of buried meander rivers.[138]

The historical recreation of this northern environment had been accomplished for the almost exclusive benefit of certain people who had lived and travelled there and known its

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[135] Douglas to Whalley, 5 August 1955, File 18, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.
[136] Whalley, *John Hornby*, xiii.
[137] Every biography ever written of Douglas has mentioned Hornby. An interesting and recent example of this tendency lies in Raymond John Howgego, ed., *Encyclopedia of Exploration,* vol. 4, *1850 to 1940: Continental Exploration* (Potts Point, NSW: Hordern House, 2008), where Douglas's biography (p.459) appears as a sub-entry following the biography of Hornby (pp. 458-59). One can only speculate how much this arrangement would have infuriated Douglas and his friends.
[138] Whalley, *John Hornby*, 1.

contours and cadences, as Whalley wrote in letter after letter to northerners, like this one: "My book was written for such a person as yourself rather than for those who do not know the country and therefore cannot tell whether it is true or not."[139] And finally, this northern environment, rebuilt cognitively in southern Canada in the making of this book, had been a widespread collaborative effort of commemoration within this community of old northern hands. In seeking to unearth memories of Hornby, Whalley had prompted the remembering of much other information about the early twentieth-century North that would likely otherwise have been forgotten:

> Out of the long detailed memories came talk about topography and the people; about the geology and animals; about the boats, canoes, aircraft; but most of all about the life, and the lichens, the insects, the birds; and the caribou, and the Barren Ground. Anecdotes in the Northern manner accumulated, multiplied, cross-fertilised each other to produce some strange offspring. The primary materials began to speak in their own rhythms and in their own dialect.[140]

The Legend of John Hornby, produced from the nostalgic exploratory reminiscences and records of Douglas and other such people, likewise inherited and communicated something of the flavour of these primary materials: their emphasis on personal experiences, northern friendships, and intimate connections to the land. It commemorated and preserved the activities of the early twentieth-century North in written, published form, so that such endeavour would not be forever lost, even if it was temporarily unacknowledged by certain postwar northern actors and, indeed, by professional historians. It must not be forgotten, however, that Douglas's version of northern history, in turn, also downplayed or obscured the actions of other historical northern peoples, most notably the indigenous peoples amongst whom he had lived and travelled during his northern sojourns before returning to his home in southern Canada. As the practices of history-making among northern Canadian explorers in the twentieth century are studied further, scholars will uncover, with increasing precision, both the emphases and the elisions of such colonial narratives.

Despite Douglas's and Blanchet's fears that their work in the North would be forgotten, as provoked by the behaviour of some of their successors in such work, other civil servants, scientists, and travellers to northern Canada did, in fact, demonstrate a tangible commitment to remembering and commemorating the history of exploration in that region. Such people

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[139] Whalley to D.H.C. Mason, 8 January 1964, File 14, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA. See also Whalley to Mrs. Brodie Hoare, 27 August 1963; Whalley to Arthur S. Hamilton, 29 October 1963; both File 14, Box 2, Location 1032c, QUA.

[140] Whalley, *John Hornby*, 4.

retraced the journeys of their predecessors whenever they were able to break away from their professional careers in the South, and commemorated earlier travellers and explorers in their journals and in their own unpublished and published narratives of northern travel.

One such link is revealed in a letter that Blanchet received about half a year before his death from a leader in this fledgling wilderness canoeing and travel community, which began to bloom in the 1960s. Eric Morse described himself as a "summer tourist" in the North, and paid tribute to the kind of travel that Blanchet had accomplished in a time now steadily drawing away from the present: "We salute you as a still surviving member of that tough breed of 'professional' travellers by canoe (not helicopters!) in that forbidding land...." About forty years later, Blanchet would finally receive his first full biographical treatment from another member of that community.[141] Much more research is needed into the relationships of history, memory and practice that first bound together and continue to connect these two generations of northern travellers. Yet this lineage must be noted, if only tentatively, as it provides a means by which to begin to trace more accurately exploratory traditions of transmitting human and natural knowledge about the North that were sustained throughout the entire twentieth century.

This chapter has brought forth, from the milieu of postwar discourses about the Canadian North, practices of exploration situated at the intersection of history and memory. These practices, as seen through their negotiated achievement in the activities of Douglas and Blanchet, as well as Stefansson and Whalley, were motivated by reasons and realized through actions disparate from, yet informed and influenced by other contemporary scientific, governmental, and popular ways of understanding and representing the North. Throughout their production of northern histories and memories, Douglas and Blanchet attempted to foreground their expertise to speak about the North of the past; when they spoke, it was in an exploratory idiom accented by specific personal, interpersonal, emotional, and moral considerations. They debated what kind of information was worth preserving and forgetting, how their personal experiences fit into larger narratives of action and understanding, and how best to safeguard their own and others' hard-won knowledge for the implied benefit of future generations. This chapter builds upon the discussions and conclusions of earlier chapters by examining the imbrication of personal relationships and memories with the creation of northern knowledge at an advanced stage of Douglas's, Blanchet's, and Stefansson's lives. As these

[141] Eric W. Morse to Blanchet, 30 December 1965, File 1, Box 1, MS 0498, BCA; Hoyle, *Northern Horizons*. See also Eric Morse, *Freshwater Saga: Memoirs of a Lifetime of Wilderness Canoeing in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

practices ended once those lives had run their courses, so does this chapter, having come to the end of their stories, conclude this dissertation's analysis. While the fourth protagonist of the dissertation, Richard Finnie, continued to construct and to preserve memories of his northern friends and acquaintances into his own twilight years, his efforts surpass the dates that bound this investigation; they await their own future historian of northern history and memory.

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This dissertation as a whole has demonstrated that negotiations of exploratory identity and knowledge were not confined to the later years of the lives of Douglas, Blanchet, Stefansson, and Finnie, but were, instead, constant preoccupations that attended their many different practices of exploration—including their fieldwork, their correspondence, their publications, and their interpersonal relationships—in northern Canada and in southern North America throughout the first half of the twentieth century. By attending to the production of northern knowledge at different geographical scales and sites, as well as the specific social and material means through which they circulated between people and places, this dissertation has suggested the need to inquire further into alternative spaces and practices that shaped and enabled the knowledge created about the Canadian North in the twentieth century.

Building on the insights of Felix Driver and others in different imperial contexts, various chapters of this dissertation have sought to trace the continuation of natural historical and exploratory sensibilities and practices from the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century. In addition to the preservation of discourses of exploration within geographical and scientific arctic fieldwork in the late twentieth century, as chronicled by Richard Powell and others, this chapter has suggested another community, that of wilderness canoeists, in which exploratory sensibilities continued to enable imaginative transactions with northern historical endeavours and constructions of northern identities. By persistently offering the social and mental tools that enable individuals in North America, as elsewhere, to transform their notions of self, their perceptions of places, and their relationship with the modern world, the idea of exploration has retained purchase not only into the twentieth century, but even into the purportedly postcolonial space of twenty-first-century society.

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