"Abundantly Worthy of its Past": Agnes Maule Machar and Early Canadian Historical Fiction

Janice Fiamengo

When *Stories of the British Empire* (1914) was brought out by William Briggs, a prominent Methodist publisher in Toronto, Agnes Maule Machar (1837-1927) was in her late seventies and had spent her adult life chronicling the moral dimensions of British and Canadian history. Although she is little known today, Machar was a successful writer in late-Victorian Canada whose career, spanning five decades, illuminates the historical and national preoccupations of her era. *Stories of the British Empire*, a series of historical sketches written mainly for children, was one of her last book-length works and a fitting culmination of her life work in its providential view of history and its emphasis on imperialism as a Christian enterprise. In the work's foreword, Machar speaks to adult readers to emphasize the moral lesson in history, especially the evidence of divine purpose revealed by the development of the British Empire:

> No one, surely, with any adequate belief in the Divine Ruler of the Universe, can study the wonderful Story of our British Empire without being impressed with a sense of its Divine purpose, its final mission to humanity, as the end for which the shoot of Saxon freedom, planted in British soil, has grown into the greatest Empire this world has ever seen. For, despite all conflicts within and without, all checks, reactions and hindrances arising from human selfishness and self-will, all temporary triumphs of tyranny, we inherit a régime of "Peace and good-will," gradually beaten out by our sturdy forefathers, into a just and free government. (x)

As Machar describes it here, the task of the historical writer is to clarify the larger meaning behind the surface tensions, conflicts, and

setbacks of human history. Where an unenlightened reader might see mainly failures, selfishness, and tyranny, the Christian historian discerns a coherent pattern. Machar's articulation of this conventional idea is a useful starting point for a discussion of early Canadian historical fiction not merely because of its didacticism but also because of the complexities it suggests. For even while stressing providence, Machar emphasizes the tangle of missed opportunities, mighty obstacles, failures of principle, and triumphs of tyranny that obscure divine purpose. As I hope to demonstrate, even Machar's most straightforward children's works operate within this dialectic of singular truth and human complexity, attempting to juggle different kinds of justice, loyalty, and reason. As a Canadian nationalist who sought to maintain the British connection, increase friendly relations with the United States, celebrate Canada's French heritage, and encourage amity between Canada's three founding peoples, Machar took up complex and even paradoxical positions involving divided allegiances and shifting emphases. As such, her work exposes some fundamental tensions at the heart of nineteenth-century English-Canadian national identity and demonstrates the extent to which even the most apparently hegemonic narratives of this period concern themselves with the problems of historical interpretation and the vexed relationship between present and past. Machar's attempt to accommodate various national tensions is highlighted in two popular historical novels separated by nearly two decades: *For King and Country* (1874) and *Marjorie's Canadian Winter* (1893).

As someone who had been immersed from childhood in the study of ancient and modern languages, theology, and history, Machar was well positioned to teach young readers through her fiction. Born in Kingston on January 23, 1837, Machar remained a resident of that city all her life except for a year at boarding school in Montreal.[1] She divided her time between her house in town and Ferncliffe, her cottage in the Thousand Islands, where she developed a deep love of nature and animals. Daughter to a Scottish Presbyterian clergyman who was co-founder and an early principal of Queen's University, Agnes grew up in an intellectual atmosphere, receiving a sound education at home from her father and private teachers. She began to write at an early age and became a prolific poet, novelist, essayist, historian, and journalist in adulthood, often adopting the pen name Fidelis to indicate the value she placed on Christian faithfulness.[2] She won numerous prizes for her fiction and poetry, was frequently invited to recite her patriotic verse at literary gatherings, and had her poetry anthologized in early Canadian school texts. Ruth Compton Brouwer has noted that

when Archibald Lampman listed thirteen promising Canadian writers in a speech to the Literary and Scientific Society of Ottawa, "Machar had been the only woman included on his list" ("Moral" 91). She earned a name for herself as one of Canada's best-loved literary nationalists.

Machar's many essays for *The Canadian Monthly and National Review* (1872-78), *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review* (1878-82), and *The Week* (1883-96), Canada's pre-eminent cultural periodicals, reveal her Christian humanism, philanthropy, and detailed knowledge of a variety of subjects, ranging from the efficacy of prayer to factory conditions for working women. Her strong Christian, feminist, and social reform convictions led her to debate, in writing, such prominent intellectuals as the humanist and skeptic W. D. LeSueur, who acknowledged her as his most formidable opponent (Brouwer, "'Between- Age'" 350). Ramsay Cook considers her "one of the most gifted intellectuals and social critics in late nineteenth-century Canada" (186). As a glance at her more than sixty essays and poems in *The Canadian Monthly* and *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly* will reveal, history was not her only subject, but it was one of her most important, especially as it furnished lessons in morality and patriotism; she held to "a conception of history as the unfolding of God's eternal purpose" (Hallman 27). Precisely because of its strong Christian morality and didacticism, Machar's work has, since her death, been consigned to literary obscurity and she has been studied by only a few historians and one literary critic. Yet, as a writer who reached a wide audience with her prize-winning novels, Machar provides compelling evidence of the relationship between historical fiction and the major moral, social, and national issues in late-Victorian Canada.[3]

An amateur historian and author of historical fiction, Machar was part of a relatively small and elite group who wrote for love of country or, occasionally, out of political aspiration. For the first half of her career, history was not yet a separate subject at English-Canadian universities — that would not happen until George MacKinnon Wrong was appointed chair of History at the University of Toronto in 1894 (Taylor 3) — and historians had yet to establish agreed-upon methods and standards. The ideal of scientific objectivity was just beginning to enter Canada in the last decades of the nineteenth century (Berger, *Writing* 7). For Machar, as for other historical writers of this period — including William Kirby, author of the critically acclaimed historical romance *The Golden Dog* (1877), which told of the final days of the *ancien régime* in Quebec — the primary

aim of history was not so much factual accuracy as moral and national inspiration; she sought, to borrow M. Brook Taylor's phrase, "to use the past to influence the present to shape the future" (7). She understood history as a record of the past meant to heal historical wounds, reconcile hostile peoples, and inspire a spirit of faith in the new country.

We tend to regard the problematizing of history as a distinctly postmodern phenomenon, [4] and certainly Machar's sense of history was untroubled by the opacity of language. However, writers and critics of historical fiction in nineteenth-century Canada were aware of the difficulties of turning history into narrative. On the one hand, historical fiction was repeatedly celebrated as the genre most suited to national literary purpose, with cultural commentators agreeing that "the development of a recognizable literary tradition was inseparable from the establishment of a distinctive historical identity" (Gerson, *Purer* 94). With Sir Walter Scott's historical romances as the model, Canadian writers were encouraged to resurrect their country's past, tell stories of the heroes and heroines of the colonial period, and memorialize events and places rich in romantic associations. On the other hand, far from resting assured that historical truth was easily available to the impartial gatherer of facts, these writers and critics were aware that problems of accuracy, perspective, and interpretation plagued the historian. "It is not so easy a task to compile *a history of Canada* as might at first sight appear" ("Book Reviews" 446), wrote the anonymous reviewer of Andrew Archer's *A History of Canada* for *The Canadian Monthly and National Review*. The reviewer acknowledged that the country's regional and racial diversity created particular difficulties of comprehensiveness and inclusivity. A historian must attempt to unify the often separate and mutually antagonistic experiences of "the French, the English, and the Indian," a difficulty that caused many historians to fail in the "crucial test of impartiality" (447). While holding out impartiality as a goal to strive for, the reviewer suggested that it was rarely, if ever, achieved. Historical fiction was fraught with even more dangers. Goldwin Smith praised Scott's historical fiction, yet he also em-phasized that "Historical romance is a perilous thing. The fiction is apt to spoil the fact, and the fact the fiction" (*Lectures* 71). Smith and others recognized that historical facts required a narrative to make them meaningful; they also worried that the claims of narrative often overshadowed those of historical truth.

Increasing the sense of the hazards associated with historical narrative, commentators emphasized the disastrous national consequences should writers and educators fail to inspire patriotism. One writer warned

that national collapse through annexation by the United States or mass emigration by Canadians to the south would result unless Canadians were taught to love their country; he pleaded with the country's leaders to "Educate our farmers by establishing good schools, colleges and libraries within their reach. Let them feel that they are Canadians, and incite them resolutely to live for Canada" (McGoun 11). When Machar dedicated *For King and Country* "to all young Canadians" in the hope that they would be stimulated by her story "to make the future of CANADA abundantly worthy of its past" (n.p.), she was responding directly to frequent exhortations in the press, aware of her responsibility as a historical novelist to educate, to inspire righteousness and patriotism, to speak to an ethnically diverse audience, and to respond to contemporary historical debates.[5]

Much of Machar's historical fiction was intended for an audience of young readers; however, the distinction between juvenile and adult fiction was not as clear-cut in the nineteenth century as it is today. As Clarence Karr has argued of Canada's first generation of best-sellers, novelists like Ralph Connor and L.M. Montgomery did not intend their work to be read only by children, and indeed it reached a wide audience of all ages (26-40). Although Machar believed there was no more useful work than "molding the mind and manners of young Canada" ("New Ideal" 673), she also expected that some mature minds might be influenced by her historical narratives. *The Canadian Monthly and National Review* was, after all, a journal for adults; moreover, shortly after the serialization of her novel in that journal, Machar published a "Historical Sketch of the War of 1812" in the same periodical; she expressed her hope that readers who had "followed with interest" the course of the War of 1812 until the battle of Queenston Heights in her novel might want "a rapid resumé of the succeeding events" of the war (1). Machar's historical sketches and fictions were intended to enliven history so as to engage readers who might find more scholarly histories difficult and time-consuming, and thus Machar dedicated *Stories of the British Empire* to "young folks and busy folks," clearly expecting that adults might want to dip into the book. In any case, Machar expected her readers to work hard to benefit from the stories. In the Preface to *Stories of the British Empire*, Machar provides detailed instructions to readers about how to approach the collection, advising them to "read only one chapter at a time, perhaps only one in a week" (xii), to visualize and internalize the story, to consult other, related histories, and to think deeply about the "courage, endurance, sacrifices, faith and devotion" exemplified by the narratives. As in her novels, where families often read aloud and told stories to one another, Machar believed

that historical narrative had the power to bind generations together in love of God and country.

1874 was an auspicious year for the publication of a novel celebrating Canada's past. Confederation had ignited patriotic interest in the character and prospects of the new nation. Beginning in 1869, Canada First, an organization of young Anglo-Canadian intellectuals and writers, predicted a new national identity blending the best of English, Scottish, and Irish characteristics and strengthened by the country's Northern climate, rugged conditions, and the possibility of a faction-free political beginning (Berger, *Sense* 49-77). Sir John A. MacDonald's National Policy imagined a glorious future to follow building of the railway, settlement in the prairies, and tariff protection for Canadian industries. The pages of *The Canadian Monthly and National Review*, where Machar first published *For King and Country* serially as the periodical's "Prize Tale," were filled with historical sketches of events and places associated with the new country, designed to increase interest in and knowledge of Canada.[6] These pages also revealed, however, that not all commentators were sanguine about the country's prospects. Many of the articles published in 1872 and 1873 outlined Canada's considerable economic challenges and canvassed the complex political choices it faced: should the country seek to increase its national autonomy, strengthen ties within the British empire, or institute measures for greater cooperation with the United States?[7] How could a country of only four million people withstand the cultural and economic power of the United States? How could the government stem the tide of southerly emigration? Was it possible to bolster cultural autonomy while achieving economic prosperity and military security at the same time? In the midst of passionate calls for unity and expressions of skepticism about the nation's prospects, Machar's novel sought to demonstrate how diverse races and nationalities could unite in defence of a vulnerable yet noble national ideal; by telling the story of Canada's most dramatic moment of united action, she hoped to strengthen Canadian patriotism without inflaming anti-American sentiment.

The main incident in *For King and Country* is the battle at Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812, which Machar compares in importance and honour to the battles at Thermopylae and Waterloo. Perhaps her emphasis on a defining military moment reflected the Canada First principle that "the martial gesture was invariably equated with national assertion" (Berger, *Sense* 57); it certainly conveyed her understanding that historical fiction demanded conflict. Queenston Heights was a decisive victory for Canadian forces and involved the martyrdom of General Isaac

Brock, who fought side by side with his men during the fiercest part of the battle. Machar devotes some pages to the celebration of Brock, who is memorialized as "the head and the animating spirit of the country's defence" (249). The pages of the novel are richly sprinkled with historical personages in addition to Brock, including the American General Hull and the Indian allies Tecumseh and Blackhawk. The emotional centre of the novel, though, is the fictional story of Ernest Heathcote, a humble schoolteacher of American parentage, who is in love with Lilias Meredith, the daughter of an English army major. Despite his American birth, Ernest is devoted to his adopted country and determined to join in its defence. For a while, rumours about his treachery estrange him from Lilias and her father, who hopes that Lilias will marry the English Captain Percival. However, Ernest gives a convincing display of his loyalty at Queenston Heights, where he saves the life of Lilias's father and rescues a fatally injured Captain Percival on the battlefield; both men ultimately acknowledge his fitness to marry Lilias. With the momentum of the American assault decisively checked, Queenston Heights becomes a symbol not only of a Canadian defensive victory, but of the national virtues necessary to guarantee an independent and united future.

The War of 1812 provided a fitting subject for Machar's celebration of Canada's past for a number of reasons. It was remembered as a war fought largely by Canadian volunteers rather than by the British Army, which was preoccupied, in the war's early phases, with Napoleon in Europe. Thus the war demonstrated Canada's practical ability to defend itself and the patriotism that caused ordinary farmers to take up arms against a formidable enemy. As one grizzled old pioneer comments of Canada's human resources, "there's many a brave yeoman in it will give his heart's blood sooner than see the Stars and Stripes waving over it!" (12). In addition, the War of 1812 was a defensive battle, a justified resistance to an assault "on a peaceful, unoffending province" (29). Even Ernest Heathcote, son of a Quaker pacifist mother, rejects the neutrality to which he might otherwise have inclined, feeling it his duty to defend Canada against an unprovoked assault. Heightening the heroism and honour of the Canadian defence is the fact that Canadian forces were seriously outnumbered at the outset of the war. In fact, Machar shows, the situation seemed so hopeless that only a very noble people could have chosen loyalty to the Crown and the prospect of a brutal defeat over the attractive terms of peace offered by the American invaders: alone and unprotected, the hardy Canadian settlers "might have been excused for wavering; but they did not waver" (166).

Machar's stress on a decisive moment forging a new and powerful national identity is conveyed through her emphasis on the various ethnic and racial affiliations of the characters who join together to defend their homes. Lilias's closest friend is Marjorie McLeod, daughter of the Scottish Highlander Colonel McLeod. Marjorie has been raised a passionate Jacobite by her father, whose family has suffered from its loyalty to the cause; truly her father's daughter, Marjorie reads Ossian and champions the Highlanders in song. But neither she nor her father allows such sympathies to interfere with their British loyalties. Lilias's father, on the other hand, is strongly English, with an Englishman's civility and class consciousness; eventually, the experience of fighting alongside his daughter's suitor, Ernest, reconciles Major Meredith not only to Ernest himself but also to the class mobility of Canadian society. Most significantly, the novel celebrates the pivotal role of Indian allies in supporting the Canadian cause. Chief Tecumseh, the Shawnee leader, "truly one of the heroes of the war" (222), comes in for praise almost equal to that of the godlike Brock, and in fact we learn that the two generals resemble each other "in some of their essential and noble characteristics" (218). Machar's insistence on the crucial assistance offered by Indian allies in the war supports a vision of a united Canada protected equally by "all its subjects, whether red or white" (171). General Brock's sense of the debt owed to Tecumseh and his warriors is attested when he "[took] off his own sash and publicly adorned the Chief with it, as a special mark of honour" (222). Lilias owes the preservation of her father's life partly to Blackhawk, another important Indian leader, who comes to Major Meredith's defense at a crucial moment. *For King and Country* presents Native heroes as worthy ancestors of present-day Canadians, ancestors who are owed a profound debt of gratitude.

While emphasizing the strength of diverse Canadians united against the American enemy, *For King and Country* is perhaps most interesting on the vexed subject of Canadian-American relations, which are embodied in the person of Ernest Heathcote. Ernest's father had been an American officer who fought for the Republican cause and his mother a Quaker from New England. When his father died from wounds received in the War of Independence, Ernest and his mother were taken in by his mother's sister, Patience, who had married Jacob Thurstane, a Loyalist, and emigrated to Upper Canada. An American by birth and blood, Ernest has grown up in Canada and come to love his adopted country while never forgetting the claims of the land of his birth. He honours his father's memory by valuing his love of independence and has studied thoroughly the reasons for the revolutionary war, learning by heart "the oppressions and exactions and

high-handed acts which … had made the old British blood of the colonists boil under the sense of hopeless injustice, and roused true-hearted men to rear the standard of defiance" (53-54). In this description, Machar explains the War of Independence as a quintessentially British blow for justice, almost as British as the Loyalists' faith! Ernest is loyal both to his father's cause and to that of his adopted country, and is represented by Machar as the finest of Canadian patriots, sympathetic to the best in both countries and rigorously critical of the faults of each, while recognizing their common parent in Great Britain, "the land of so many heroic traditions" (53) and defender of Europe from Napoleonic despotism. Even while celebrating Canadian loyalty to Britain, Machar could justify American disloyalty as merely a different form of Britishness that did not fundamentally disturb America's claim to a British inheritance.

Under the patronage of Major Meredith, Ernest has gained a respectable education and become a schoolteacher, but he is barred from happiness because of his social inferiority, the Major being "so staunchly entrenched in his old Tory ideas of *caste*" (51) that he cannot accept Ernest for a son-in-law. By delineating Ernest's divided yet uncompromised allegiance and the pain he feels as a result of Major Meredith's Old World respect for rank, Machar levels a number of criticisms at Canadians, suggesting that a zealous defence of the British connection should not blind Canadians to American virtues and should not lead Canadians to import Old World class prejudices into the New World. Moreover, Machar is careful to state that the best Americans disapproved of the War of 1812, thus paving the way for reconciliation. Ernest knows that only a "portion of the American people" gave free rein to their "unscrupulously aggressive spirit" while "in his father's New England especially, there were many who denounced the idea as strenuously as any Canadian could do" (55). Machar suggests that defence of the British connection and of Canadian territory is laudable, and "a reckless, unscrupulous invasion of a peaceful country … must be resisted to the death by every honest man" (55), but loyal resistance should not be undertaken in a spirit of anti-Americanism. Machar engages a profound paradox in her version of pro-American Canadian nationalism. According to her narrative, Canada is defined, literally, by its refusal to be American, yet Machar seeks to maintain Canadian distinctiveness while banishing the anti-Americanism at its core. For the rest of her life, Machar was to campaign in writing to combat anti-Americanism and to encourage a closer relationship between Canada and the United States.[8] In *For King and Country*, her contention that the two

countries are children of a common parent sits uneasily beside her portrait of a loyal and vulnerable colony menaced by a treacherous enemy.

When Machar published *Marjorie's Canadian Winter* in 1893, almost two decades after *For King and Country*, her sense of the historical issues needing to be addressed shows significant continuities and differences. Friendly relations between Canada and the United States remained a major issue. Twenty years of almost continuous economic recession in Canada had made economic co-operation between the United States and Canada a far more pressing issue than it had seemed in the early days of MacDonald's National Policy, which had promised an economic security that did not materialize. Some commentators even advocated economic union between the U.S. and Canada, and Machar herself wrote *Our Life Blood Ebbs Away: A Plea for Continental Union* (1893), a broadside poem promoting continental free trade (though not, as the subtitle suggests, full annexation as recommended by Goldwin Smith in his 1891 *Canada and the Canadian Question*). Furthermore, the role of French-Canadians in national history had become increasingly important for Machar while the position of Native peoples had shifted. In the two decades following Confederation, Quebec nationalism had become inward-looking and defensive, struggling to maintain French and Catholic rights in a separate school system as a way of resisting Anglophone and Protestant dominance. The Northwest Rebellion of 1885 (which Machar, like many of her contemporaries, understood primarily as a conflict between French Catholics and English Protestants) and the Manitoba Schools' Question, when Manitoba moved to abolish French as an official language, exacerbated tensions between English and French, fundamentally splitting the country along racial lines. The Indian and Métis roles in the Northwest Rebellion seemed to reveal Native peoples not as heroic allies but as desperate peoples driven to violence and requiring firm, gentle guidance. The relationship between all these founding peoples becomes the focus of *Marjorie's Canadian Winter*.

The novel is about Marjorie Fleming, a young American girl from New York City who goes to stay with her Canadian cousins, the Ramsays, in Montreal while her father recovers from illness in the south. In Montreal, Marjorie learns to enjoy the pleasures of snowshoeing, sledding, and Winter Carnival and hears stories from her uncle and from the Ramsays' friend, Professor Duncan, about Canada's heroic French pioneers. These stories, which reveal Machar's debt to the American writer Francis Parkman, teach Marjorie lessons about the self-sacrifice and heroism of

the Jesuits, who suffered to evangelize the New World. The novel relates Marjorie's personal adventures in Montreal alongside the four centuries of Christian history that have shaped the city. At the personal level, Marjorie contemplates the meaning of a life lived for others and is confirmed in philanthropy by her encounters with a poor family, the Browns, and a young French boy, Louis. Her flighty friend Ada, who belongs to a wealthy Montreal family, suffers a serious illness, which leads her to question her spiritual state. Providing the moral context for Marjorie's and Ada's questions about how to follow Christ is the larger historical perspective offered by the tales of the Jesuits.

The novel is not historical fiction per se, but it is explicitly concerned with historical narrative in the stories that Marjorie learns about Isaac Jogues, Père le Jeune and other Christian martyrs. In addition, the novel foregrounds historical and national divisions: as an American, Marjorie is initially worried that her cousins will not like her because she is aware that many Canadians detest Americans. This national prejudice is referred to and disparaged on a number of occasions. Further, in coming to Montreal, Marjorie encounters a city in which French language, culture, and history are all around her, and thus the division between English and French is an important issue taken up by the novel. Finally, the antagonistic encounter between Jesuit missionaries and resistant or uncomprehending Native peoples is a central feature of the stories Marjorie hears from her two mentors, highlighting the most absolute division in the novel, between those who are native to the land and non-native newcomers. A conflict between faith and unbelief structures the two levels of narrative, the historical and the present time.

These various historical and cultural divisions are given concrete expression through setting and narrative situation. Marjorie's train journey from New York to Montreal is marked by a striking change of temperature and atmosphere, as Marjorie leaves the gloomy rains of New York City for the exhilarating cold and bright snow of Canada. She leaves a familiar and taken-for-granted suburban environment for the cultural density of Montreal, where every building is imbued with significant historical associations, many of them connected to Catholicism. Religious and national conflicts are highlighted through a thematic emphasis on interpretation and understanding. The Christian mission to spread understanding of salvation is stressed as Marjorie and her cousins listen to and question the stories about Jesuit hardships and heroism, wondering aloud about the Jesuits' faith and the hostile reactions of the Iroquois. The heroism of Native peoples emphasized in *For King and Country* is decisively disa-

vowed here in the wake of the Northwest Rebellions, as Native historical actors are recast as pitiful and misled peoples needing the guidance and instruction of the newcomers. Also, linguistic difference is emphasized in Marjorie's encounter with Louis, whom she visits during his recovery from an industrial accident; at first, she has considerable difficulty understanding him and making herself understood, but when she reads him some French prayers, a channel of communication opens. Questions of religious understanding separate Marjorie from her friend Ada and are only partly overcome by Ada's illness.

The novel suggests that such divisions and misunderstandings can be remedied through shared faith, which is capable of smoothing over historical animosities and preventing miscommunication. At the beginning of the novel, Marjorie's father reads her a story about the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights, a parable about the Christian "light that shineth in darkness" (26). The novel recurs to this parable frequently, emphasizing how the many different stories of Christian zeal and piety encountered throughout the British empire, where missionaries, explorers, and immigrants spread the light of God's truth, are all examples of light dispelling the darkness of ignorance and unbelief. The brilliant whiteness of the snow Marjorie encounters in Montreal becomes associated with the professor's stories of Christian martyrdom: all of the scenes that Professor Duncan chooses for his lantern slide-show are snowy Christmas scenes, and his stories of martyrdom frequently involve hunger and cold during winter travels. Thus, his many references to the bringing of light equate the purity of Christian ministry with the pure whiteness of the Canadian landscape, a frequent trope in Canadian nationalist discourse, as Mariana Valverde has pointed out (17, 23). The "discovery" of the New World itself is described as a Christian enterprise, as when Samuel de Champlain declares "that the conversion of a single soul was better than the discovery of a continent" (*Marjorie's* 125). The happiest of the Jesuit stories emphasize French beneficence and Indian gratitude, as the initial hostility of the Indians is resolved through the practice of Christian love.

The racist overtones of the metaphorical framework are clear. As Dianne Hallman points out (39), Native peoples are consistently associated with spiritual darkness and debasement while white Christians, whether American, English-Canadian, or French-Canadian, are heroic and pure, labouring in the darkness to dispel ignorance and error. The narrative espouses reconciliation and amity between French and English, Catholic and Protestant, American and Canadian, through recognition of

their shared imperial Christian errand; Catholic and Protestant characters in Professor Duncan's stories discover their Christian familiality just as American Marjorie and her Canadian cousins are meant to do. When Isaac Jogues, a captive of the Iroquois, is treated kindly by a Dutch pastor in Port Orange, he discovers that Protestants, "whom he had been taught to call 'heretics'– were fellow-Christians, after all" (133). In Machar's formulation, British imperialism is the spiritual heir of the Jesuit mission in its attempt to evangelize the heathen. Seeking a contemporary parallel for his stories of self-sacrifice and courage, Professor Duncan compares Père le Jeune to Gordon of Khartoum, whose martyrdom in Africa becomes known to the Ramsays on one of their story-telling evenings.[9] Professor Duncan declares that "it oughtn't to be a long step from Gordon to Père le Jeune" because the two men are involved in a similar quest, "serving the same Master and doing his work!" (208). Moreover, the scene of Jogues's missionary activity and especially of his martyrdom spans both sides of what would become the Canada-United States border and thus belongs equally, as Professor Duncan stresses to Marjorie, "to our country and to yours" (142). In soothing Marjorie's fears that her cousins will dislike her for being American, her father insists that "there is no reason why the children of the same mother should hate each other, because they live on different sides of a river, or because some have been longer in America than others" (57). Machar's enthusiasm about the role of the French in Canadian history and her growing awareness of the socially oriented Christianity of American Protestantism, which included missionary and evangelical work, led her to elide fundamental religious and cultural differences to assert an ultimate Christian unity.

The strain that such an assertion places on the narrative is revealed in a variety of omissions, vague suggestions, and outright contradictions. The fact of English-French difference is evoked every time Marjorie sees a nun passing through convent doors or hears a conversation she cannot understand; the two cultures rarely intersect in this large, divided city, and although Marjorie's Montreal winter is filled with visits to French cathedrals and stories of French martyrs, her only interaction with a living French person occurs when she visits little Louis, an exploited child labourer who has lost his arm working in a poorly built factory owned, presumably, by an English-Canadian capitalist. Many of Professor Duncan's stories seem influenced by his awareness of the ultimate defeat of the French presence in North America. Towards the end of the lantern slide lectures, he refers to the dying Champlain "happily unconscious that the

English colony already growing up on the eastern coast of the continent, re-enforced by the Dutch traders of Manhattan, was eventually to wrest from France the rich possessions he had devoted his life to secure to her sway" (187-88). Here the story suggests a certain sympathy for the French defeat, but it also emphasizes that French Canada remains French in character largely because of English justice. As far as Machar's sympathy for French-Canadian culture and national aspirations could take her, it could not lead her to question the legitimacy of English-Canadian power, and she ultimately preferred to celebrate French achievements in the past than to argue for French autonomy in the present.

Much more striking than the obvious subordination of French Catholic culture in Montreal is the complete absence of Native peoples or Native cultural symbols in Montreal's present, an absence that seems, at least to a modern-day reader, an obvious extension of their relegation to the darkness in the Jesuit tales. Machar is not unsympathetic to contemporary Native struggles for land and cultural rights, and the narrative does make reference to the Northwest Rebellion, which is presented as occurring during Marjorie's visit. The Ramsays and Professor Duncan condemn its cause, expressing anger at the injustice practiced against Métis and Indian peoples and suggesting that "ordinary humanity" and "faithful attention" on the part of government agents "would have redressed" their grievances and thus prevented the conflict (318). In the brief space this incident occupies in the narrative, Machar makes a stern criticism of anti-Christian neglect and selfishness. However, she does not support the uprising and is horrified by the thought that "these poor people will learn the bad lesson that bullets will attract attention when all other appeals have failed" (318). Whereas the War of 1812 and even the War of Independence can be understood as necessary and righteous defensive actions, the Northwest Rebellion is merely a chaotic outbreak by a helpless and pitiable people. Professor Duncan laments, "What a comment it is on our boasted progress, to send men out to shoot down these misguided and neglected people, instead of giving them kind care and common justice" (318). The reference to kind care" echoes one of his earlier stories about Champlain's relationship with the Montagnais, who are "very much like children, and in Champlain they always found a fatherly friend" (183). With Indians demoted from vigorous allies to childlike supplicants, this novel seems unable to imagine Native peoples joining with other Canadians to build a strong country. The French survive as an autonomous if conquered people, but except for their presence as weak and dangerous rebels in the West, Native peoples

do not. Their diminished status in *Marjorie's Canadian Winter* provides an unintended narrative counter-text to Machar's celebration of Christian benevolence.

In these two novels, Machar took up the major themes of nineteenth-century Canadian history – the meaning of British loyalty and French-English relations – and treated them in a fairly orthodox manner. According to Berger, the main strand in Victorian-Canadian historical writing worked at balancing "emotional loyalty to the Empire" (*Writing* 11) with a vigorous assertion of Canadian national distinctiveness, a theme consistent with Machar's portrayal of Canadian identity in *For King and Country*. Only her marked pro-Americanism was unique. Her attempt to ameliorate French-English tensions in *Marjorie's Canadian Winter* was also consistent with the nationalist view that conflicts between English and French "were due to misunderstanding, a lack of knowledge, and a failure of sympathy" (Berger, *Writing* 18). Machar's historical fiction did not subvert contemporary assumptions. Neither did Machar write postmodern history, conscious of its own artifice or intent on revealing the ultimate unknowability of history. She saw history as the repository of moral truths that the historian attempted to divine. In the process of uncovering these truths, however, Machar explicitly grappled with the various moral, political, and ethnic tensions that complicated Canada's past as well as its present. As such, her fiction provides a window onto important Canadian preoccupations in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Central to these preoccupations was Machar's attempt to reconcile many of the national and ethnic conflicts that strained Canada's image of itself as a just, prosperous, and culturally distinct nation. She imagined an independent, New World Canada free from the class injustice of England, yet she revered England as the defender of justice and liberty. She admired the Republican cause and the desire for independence while preferring the self-sacrificing loyalty of the United Empire Loyalists. In her historical fiction, French Canadians were celebrated as worthy ancestors but also assumed to be a conquered people dependent on English democracy and justice. Native Canadians were represented as crucial allies in past struggles to preserve Canadian independence yet also a culturally and spiritually subordinate people whose decline was inevitable. Whether Machar's young readers were able to sort out the complex strands of her nationalist and imperialist program must remain an open question, but these two novels suggest something of the competing allegiances and constituencies that structured Canadian national identity in the late nineteenth century.

Notes

[1] For a fuller discussion of Machar's life and writing, see Gerson (*Three Writers*) and Hallman. For a discussion of Machar's social reform ideas, see Cook 186-92.

[2] As in many such cases, it appears that the pseudonym was not intended to create anonymity.

[3] Brouwer makes a strong case for Machar's centrality to the literary culture of her day through reference to the frequency with which Machar's name appeared on lists of distinguished Canadian writers ("Moral" 91).

[4] See especially Hutcheon 61-74.

[5] MacGillivray and Lynes suggest that the Pacific Scandal of 1873 may have been an important historical context for the novel, prompting Machar to use the story to remind her readers "that the present generation cannot simply rest on those hard-won laurels but must continue to exemplify in their own lives those same values of self-sacrifice, honour and morality" (7-8).

[6] Examples include J.G. Bourinot's "From the Great Lakes to the Sea" (1872), M.J. Griffin's "The Romance of the Wilderness Missions" (1872), G.T.D.'s "The Burning of the 'Caroline'" (1873), and Daniel Wilson's "Toronto of Old" (1873).

[7] See, for example, the editorial "Great Britain, Canada, and the United States" (1872), which defended the British connection, exhorting Canadians that as Canada moved towards independence, it should do so "not in ingratitude, but in truth and honour" (Editors 466); Charles Lindsey's "A North American Zollverein" (1872) advocated a mutually beneficial trading relationship with the U.S. but warned of the need for political autonomy, while J. McL's "Our Commercial Relations with the United States" (1872) advocated much closer ties generally with the United States.

[8] See, for example, her articles "When Will It End?" and "Centripetal Christianity."

[9] General Charles Gordon, born in Kent, England, became governor of the Sudan in 1877 and died in Khartoum fighting the Islamic forces of Mohammed Ahmed (the Mahdi). He was proclaimed a martyred warrior-saint by the British public.

Works Cited

Berger, Carl. *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1970.

— . *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing, 1900-1970*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1976.

"Book Reviews." Anonymous review of Andrew Archer's *A History of Canada*. *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 9.5 (1876): 446-49.

Bourinot, J.G. "From the Great Lakes to the Sea." *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 1.6 (1872): 538-45.

Brouwer, Ruth Compton. "The 'Between-Age' Christianity of Agnes Machar." *Canadian Historical Review* 65.3 (1984): 347-70.

— . "Moral Nationalism in Victorian Canada: The Case of Agnes Machar." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 20.1 (1985): 90-108.

Cook, Ramsay. *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985.
Editors. "Great Britain, Canada, and the United States." *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 1.5 (1872): 453-66.
G.T.D. "The Burning of the 'Caroline.'" *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 3.4 (1873): 289-92.
Gerson, Carole. *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1989.
—. *Three Writers of Victorian Canada and Their Works*. Downsview: ECW, 1983.
Griffin, M.J. "The Romance of the Wilderness Missions: A Chapter Of Our Early History." *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 1.4 (1872): 344-53.
Hallman, Dianne M. "Cultivating a Love of Canada through History: Agnes Maule Machar, 1837-1927." *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*. Ed. Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice. Vancouver: UBC P, 1997. 25-50.
Hutcheon, Linda. *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1988.
Karr, Clarence. *Authors and Audiences: Popular Canadian Fiction in the Early Twentieth Century*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2000.
Kirby, William. *The Golden Dog*. Montreal: Lovell, 1877.
Lindsey, Charles. "A North American Zollverein." *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 1.2 (1872):132-36.
Machar, Agnes Maule (Fidelis). "Centripetal Christianity." *The Week*. 2 Dec. 1892. 7-8.
— . *For King and Country*: A Story of 1812. Toronto: Adam, Stevenson, 1874.
— . "Historical Sketch Of the War of 1812." *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 6.1 (1874):1-24.
— . *Marjorie's Canadian Winter*: *A Story of the Northern Lights*. Boston: Lothrop, 1893.
— . "The New Ideal of Womanhood." *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review* (1879): 659-76.
— . *Our Life Blood Ebbs Away: A Plea for Continental Union*. Broadside. 1893 (?).
— . *Stories of the British Empire*. 2nd ed. Toronto: William Briggs, 1914.
— . "When Will It End?" *The Week*. 10 Jan. 1896. 156-57.
MacGillivray, S.R. and J. Lynes. "Paradise Ever Becoming: War of 1812 Narratives for Young Readers." *Canadian Children's Literature* 22.4 (1996): 6-16.
McGoun, Archibald. "Commercial Union with the United States." *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review* 5.1 (1880): 1-11.
McL, J. "Our Commercial Relations with the United States." *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 1.3 (1872): 214-18.
Smith, Goldwin. *Canada and the Canadian Question*. 1891. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1971.
— . *Lectures* and Essays. Toronto: Hunter Rose, 1881.
Taylor, M. Brook. *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth-Century English Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1989.
Valverde, Mariana. *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. Toronto: McClelland, 1991.
Wilson, Daniel. "Toronto of Old." *Canadian Monthly and National Review* 4.2 (1873): 361-75.