

“Fugitive Visions”: Cultural Pseudomemory and the Death of the Indigenous Child in the Indian Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott¹

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ALTHOUGH POET-BUREAUCRAT Duncan Campbell Scott’s personal implication in colonial government policy remains controversial, he is often viewed as a representative figure of racial violence in Canadian cultural memory. On the one hand, the works known as his “Indian poems” provided generations of readers in Canada, the United States,² and Great Britain with images of a haunting wilderness still forceful within the English Canadian³ literary imagination. The narrative of historicized Indigenous extinguishment implicit in this imagery has long been used to justify the theft of Indigenous lands and to perpetuate politically undermining characterizations of Indigenous peoples and communities. On the other hand, over his fifty-three-year career with the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), four as the superintendent of education and nearly twenty in the top position of deputy superintendent general, Scott not only oversaw the systematic decimation of tribal sovereignty rights, but also legislated mandatory attendance at chronically underfunded and abusive Indian residential schools (IRS) in which estimated thousands of Indigenous⁴ children died of neglect, abuse, and disease (Titley 90-91). Scholars have variously used this dual role to characterize Scott as a figure of conflict, “cultural tension” (Frye 221), “contradiction” (Lynch), and even “duplicitous” (Flood) in Canadian cultural memory, producing an extensive body of criticism deconstructing his Indian poems, short stories, and non-fictional Indian Affairs writings. Yet this criticism, combined with historical studies documenting cover-ups of abuse in the IRS system during and beyond Scott’s tenure, raises another set of crucial questions about the potential confluence of policy and poetry in his work. Given Scott’s insistence that Canadian poets have a responsibility to shape the cultural memory of the (colonial) nation, what is the relation-

ship between his IRS policy and his depictions of Indigenous children in the Indian poems? Did Scott's fictionalized representations of the deaths of Indigenous children contribute to his department's protracted exertions shaping the English Canadian public's responses to the IRS system, especially public responses to reports documenting the abuses and deaths of children supposedly cared for by the DIA?

This article answers these questions by searching for a narrative thus far underexamined in criticism of Scott: the story of Indigenous child mortality in his Indian poems. Building on John S. Milloy's crucial identification of the "administrative fictions" that governed IRS policy (see below), I argue that Scott's depictions of Indigenous children construct a *fiction of neglect* that creates a *cultural pseudomemory* of Indigenous childhood within English Canadian historical narratives. This fiction of neglect links his poetry and non-fictional DIA writings with his bureaucratic policy through pervasive images of "frightened" (Scott, "Half-Breed" 32), dead, and dying Indigenous children and youth. It tells a story about Indigenous children in a fictionalized Canadian past in which the children are always already neglected and threatened within their home communities. It depicts Indigenous parents as powerless to protect their children from two fictionalized threats: an inherently violent Indigenous community (fiction #1), and an inherently flawed Indigenous identity (fiction #2). I begin by situating my analysis within the social role for poetry that Scott outlines in his non-fictional writing on Canadian literature and culture. I then analyze his depictions of Indigenous child mortality through three case studies: the non-fictional essay "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912" (1914), the poem "The Mission of the Trees" (1905), and the poem "A Scene at Lake Manitou" (1935).

I read Scott's fictions of Indigenous childhood as a cultural pseudomemory for Anglo audiences. Stemming from the understanding that recollections of the past occur not only within individual minds but also as part of larger social structures, "cultural memory" refers to shared memories of a "distant past" "formalized" (Whitehead 132) and "transmitted" (142) through a variety of media, including rituals and "texts" (132). It emerges from families, social classes, ethnic communities, workplaces, and institutions, and it is often linked to ideological and material territories such as landscapes. However, though cultural memory produces the "schema[s]" (Whitehead 126), or interpretive

frameworks, through which individuals and communities analyze past events, interpret the present, and envision the future, it is “rarely singular, is often contested, and is the most easily configured, abused, and manipulated form of memory” (Creet 14). I argue in this article that Scott’s fictionalizations of Indigenous child mortality function as one such manipulation of cultural memory. They do so by structuring a pseudomemory of Indigenous childhood in the prenatal Canadian past, simultaneously shaping a narrative foundation for English Canadian identity *and* administering Anglo responses to early-twentieth-century Indian residential schools. This pseudomemory constitutes a fundamental assault on the cultural memories of Indigenous communities, especially the authentic memories of IRS students and their families. I understand that affirming “authentic” memory is currently unpopular in some academic circles. However, the distinction between a bureaucratic fiction embedded in cultural memory and intergenerational memories rooted in survivors’ experiences has grave legal and policy implications in the ongoing struggle for government accountability to Indigenous human rights in Canada.⁵ The value judgments implicit in our language choices have “material, social, and political consequences” (DeLoughrey 203) of which we cannot lose sight as scholars.⁶ This vigilance is especially true for those of us who are non-Indigenous allies in the struggle for truth and justice. In calling attention to this distinction as it emerges in the following case studies, I also aim to contribute to the growing body of scholarship investigating “how cultural memory and policy become imbricated” (Green 355) in the histories and literatures of Canadian colonial violence.

Although praise for Scott’s supposedly compassionate portrayals of a “dying race” dominated the first decades of Scott scholarship,⁷ the criticism of the past few decades has focused almost exclusively on his violently assimilationist deployments of the trope of the “doomed Noble Savage,” often touching broadly on the concept of cultural memory without explicitly naming it as such or interrogating its construction.⁸ For example, Lisa Salem-Wiseman argues that Scott’s Indian poems display remarkable “consistency” with his “administrative writing” and that this consistency emerges through “imaginative expression” (121) that translates progressivist ideology into poetic depictions of a “heroic Indian past” (127) populated by “noble” (131) individuals “stoic” (125) before “the inevitable death of an old way of life” (136). Laura Smyth

Groening and others demonstrate how this narrative extends to the macabre aspect of the Indian poems, arguing that Scott's repeated depictions of Indigenous mortality produce an ideologically charged schema through which to justify a range of injustices, from assimilation to multiple raced and gendered violences.⁹ Taken together, these narratives of a "heroic" extinct race and the haunting presence of violent death contribute to two distinct forms of cultural memory surrounding Scott's "Indian" writings. First, there is his uneasy position as a paradigmatic figure of colonial violence in contemporary Canadian cultural memory, most recently reinterrogated in Mark Abley's *Conversations with a Dead Man: The Legacy of Duncan Campbell Scott* (2013). Second, there is Scott's underacknowledged deployment of poetry and prose as politically efficacious technologies intended to create and shape cultural memory in post-Confederation Canada. This second register of cultural memory encompasses both his poetic directives for English Canadian cultural memory (with impacts both within and outside Canada) and his consistently revisionist interpretations of IRS events in his non-fiction. This paper delves into the latter form of cultural memory by interrogating how "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," "The Mission of the Trees," and "A Scene at Lake Manitou" create a narrative landscape that shapes English Canadian cultural memory through a pseudomemory of Indigenous childhood conducive to the aims and effects of the IRS system. It expands previous scholarly insights into Scott's characterization of a representative "Indian" — implicitly an adult, whether male or female — by demonstrating how the fiction of neglect works with, through, and beyond the colonial mores of his day in its depictions of Indigenous children.

The idea that literature could function as a form of cultural memory for a young nation is in fact consistent with Scott's progressivist vision for post-Confederation Canada. Scott viewed his civil service role as that of an architect of history (Weis 28-29), insisting in an untitled newspaper column that the bureaucrats of his generation "stand conservators of the past, pioneers of the future." He was also a devoted follower of fellow poet-bureaucrat Matthew Arnold and his "alignment of nation and culture" (Groening 96) in projects of social control.¹⁰ Scott's non-fictional writings strive to integrate progressivist ideology with the literary arts in the production of national cultural memory. He argued that Canada's "progress" as a nation required "[c]onnection with the past by

roots of legend and tradition” that invoke shared “memories” of dwelling on the Canadian landscape. Scott insisted that such cultural memory “is what civilization means in its highest sense” (“Tercentenary” 100-01) and that Canada could be more aptly described as a “state of mind” than a “political entity” (“Canada” 469). Consequently, he believed that English Canadian writers had a social duty to “find unique symbols” (“Poetry” 311) that would create a cultural memory for the Canadian landscape. He described these symbols as being crafted to “harmonize life and to set up nobler conditions of living; to picture perfect social states and to commend them to the reason” (“Poetry” 318). The project of colonial erasure effacing Indigenous nations’ cultural memories and land rights looms large in this *terra nullius* description. Scott insisted that “poetry” and Euro-normative, colonial progressivism have a symbiotic relationship, explaining that “the most fragile lyric is a factor in human progress as well as the most profound drama” and that “all poets are” therefore “engaged with the expression of truth” (“Poetry” 318). Read in relation to his IRS policy, Scott’s statement about poetic and literary “truth” might be seen as an affirmation of the poet’s social “duty” to present a cultural memory of Indigenous childhood conducive to the colonial progressivist aims of the IRS system: the figurative “death” of the Indigenous child through assimilation and, necessarily implicit in this violent goal, the configuration and “manipulation” of the subsequent cultural memories of abuse in residential schools.

As documented across Indigenous studies, DIA policy during and beyond Scott’s tenure pursued a twofold approach to assimilation based, on the one hand, on the attempted abolition of Indigenous communities and land holdings through the enfranchisement of Indigenous adults,¹¹ legally infantilized as “wards of the federal government” (Titley 11), and, on the other, the colonial “education” of Indigenous peoples, to be achieved largely through the “(re)production” (de Leeuw 130) of children in Indian schools. In accordance with rhetoric used to describe the British crown during treaty-making processes, the government of Canada positioned itself as a “parent” to its Indian “wards,” conceptualizing industrial and residential schools as a “mother” (Davin 12) to Indigenous children. The IRS system, an expansion of earlier missionary-run day schools administered in conjunction with the Catholic Church and major Protestant denominations, was explicitly

designed to “kill the Indian’ in the child”¹² in order to produce hybrid Christianized Canadian citizens who could claim neither Indigenous nor English/French Canadian social status. This implicit intention highlights the paradox inherent in such assimilationist policy: both enfranchisement and education were in fact intended to produce not fully integrated citizens but a churched serving class with basic literacy skills (Milloy xiii; Titley 93). Furthermore, because Indigenous children were the offspring of adults considered childlike, the ideological position of the child within this system, which Scott is infamously reputed to have described as the “final solution” to the “Indian problem,”¹³ was “complex” (de Leeuw 132). As Sarah de Leeuw identifies in analyzing the discursive construction of Indigenous children in the Canadian colonial project, their growth into Indigenous adults was incompatible with the aims of assimilation (132). “*Indian childness*,” which presupposed “childlike” “Indian adultness,” was “something to do away with entirely” (132). Assimilation — the growth of the child into a non-Indigenous adult — thus required the figurative “death” of the Indigenous child under the care of the “parental” government.

Although DIA rhetoric before, during, and after Scott’s tenure was dominated by a “fiction of care” fallaciously insisting that the government of Canada’s “beneficent”¹⁴ relationship with its Indian “wards” necessarily translated into caring *praxis* within the “mother”-like IRS system (Milloy xii-xiii), reports of widespread abuse and astounding death rates from communicable diseases arrived consistently on Scott’s desk (Milloy 110).¹⁵ Consequently, as Milloy indicates, a key professional responsibility for Scott as both superintendent of education and deputy superintendent general was the discursive management of a “whole system . . . tugging at Scott’s sleeve . . . crying out for” support (133), particularly in response to reports released to the church and political communities by Dr. P.H. Bryce between 1907 and 1922. Bryce was appointed “the department’s first medical officer in 1904” in response to high rates of communicable diseases in Indigenous communities (Titley 56). He encountered a reality that threatened the fiction of care at the core of the “Indian education” program: disproportionately high rates of tubercular infection and death across the IRS system as a result of chronically substandard sanitation and medical attention. His initial 1907 report caused a press scandal (Milloy 90-95; Titley 83-87), and Bryce eventually synopsisized his research in his 1922 publication *The*

Story of a National Crime, which unilaterally blames Scott for what he calls the department's "criminal disregard" for Indigenous children (14). Unfortunately, his parallel claim that Scott had orchestrated his removal from his post coloured the reception of this late publication, and it "was not taken very seriously, since Bryce was known to be bitterly disillusioned at the time" (Titley 86).

Presenting a public image of a forceful and effective DIA was paramount for Scott in his capacity as a government official, perhaps lending weight to Bryce's assertions. Titley notes that Scott "generally abhorred . . . bad publicity" (53). Defamatory "attack[s]" (Milloy 288) on individuals who reported abuses, especially pamphlet-circulating doctors such as Bryce, were a standard departmental tactic, as were outright contradictions of evidence (Milloy 149-51). For example, Scott insisted that a 1923 letter from an IRS student claiming chronic hunger at his school was slanderous and that "ninety-nine percent of the Indian children at these schools are too fat" (qtd. in Milloy 109). This statement contradicts multiple "negative reports" about this school and others (Milloy 109). But such explicit attacks functioned in conjunction with another, and more subtle, form of discursive management that emerges from Scott's writings on Aboriginal affairs within and beyond his official position: the fabrication of cultural memory in order to undermine critiques of the IRS system.

Scott's published non-fictional portrayals of high IRS mortality rates are sporadic. Usually, the deaths of Indigenous children are traces implicit in acknowledgements that "day and boarding schools" have overcome some "inherent difficulties" while achieving their "noticeable" and "gratifying" "success" ("First People" 468).¹⁶ But when Scott does address child mortality within the IRS system, his rhetoric harnesses the progressivist denigration of Indigenous cultures as a narrative device through which to naturalize the deaths of children in residential schools. It does so by enfolding these deaths into a cultural pseudomemory of Indigenous child mortality. In "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," one of his contributions to the multivolume survey *Canada and Its Provinces*, Scott explains that

The well-known predisposition of Indians to tuberculosis resulted in a very large percentage of deaths among the pupils. They were housed in buildings not carefully designed for school purposes, and these buildings became infected and dangerous to the inmates. It

is quite within the mark to say that fifty per cent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education which they had received therein. (206)

This passage takes up a key responsibility inherent in the culturally directive capacities that Scott outlined for both poets and civil servants: the imperative to “gain and keep the public confidence in Canadian letters” and policy (“Future” 37). Although the passage explicitly describes the history of deaths in Indian residential schools, it also *implicitly* functions as an English Canadian cultural pseudomemory of Indigenous child mortality. This pseudomemory is at once contested by and a challenge to reports such as Bryce’s. Scott posits a “memory” of Indigenous child mortality predicated on a fiction of neglect that displaces responsibility for the deaths of Indigenous children away from the DIA and onto Indigenous communities.

Scott manages IRS death rates by constructing two different cultural memories: first, the colonial cultural pseudomemory of the “doomed Indian race”; second, a narrative of “progress” within the DIA itself. His passive voice¹⁷ and authoritative vocabulary allow generalizations — “well-known,” “quite within the mark” — to displace specific statistics in this description of tubercular deaths, an implicit challenge to years of documentation compiled by Bryce and others (Bryce 8-11). Scott begins by invoking a cultural pseudomemory detailing a supposedly inherent characteristic of adult “Indians”: the “well-known predisposition of Indians to tuberculosis.” He thus naturalizes and historicizes tubercular death as an inherent characteristic of “Indianness.” His use of the verb *resulted* insists that children under IRS care died, literally, because they carried the collective “predisposition of Indians” in their bodies. Furthermore, this vocabulary links the inheritance of disease to an assumption of poor child-rearing practices: the word *result* refers in both late-Victorian and contemporary usage to the process of becoming or turning out, suggesting a narrative of children whose development has been obstructed by the Indigenous community (“result,” v., def. 1.c, *OED*). Indigenous communities are thus characterized according to a fiction of neglect that implicitly affirms the IRS system’s fiction of care. If Indian children are always already subject to disease because of their births into Indigenous communities, then the only way to “save” them from painful death is to remove them from the supposedly imperiling influence of parents and families. The deaths of children housed in

such inadequate buildings are thus transformed through Scott's narrative from egregious harms into one of the "inherent difficulties" that inevitably arise to be corrected in the pursuit of "progress."

Invoking this cultural pseudomemory of disease thus harnesses the widespread ideological structure governing early-twentieth-century Indian Affairs administration in order to present what seems to be a direct, if implicit, challenge to Bryce's claim in a 1911 letter to the department that Scott was not only "manipulating the mental activities" of his colleagues but also "counting upon the ignorance and indifference of the public to the fate of the Indians" to mask the "deception" (6). Scott's narrative counters Bryce's assertion with two contradictory but related arguments. The first emerges from the temporal context of Scott's admission: this passage attributes the 50 percent death rate only to early residential schools, simultaneously absolving the DIA under his leadership of responsibility and characterizing it as a progress-oriented department continuously tailoring itself to achieve its assimilationist goal.

Scott's second implicit response to Bryce contradicts the logic of this first one by deflecting responsibility for the deaths of Indigenous children away from the historical IRS system and DIA and onto Indigenous parents:

[W]hat was to become of the pupils who returned to the reserves? The danger was recognized that they might lapse to the level of reserve life as soon as they came into contact with their parents. . . . [T]his relapse actually happened in a large percentage of cases, and most promising pupils were found to have retrograded and to have become leaders in the pagan life of the reserves. ("Indian Affairs" 206)

Scott insists not only that the DIA holds no responsibility for students who died in the IRS system but also that the residential school, implicitly, is a space of institutional safety compared with the "danger[ous]" reserve. His vocabulary extends the fiction of neglect articulated through his narrative of inherited disease by describing the "relapse" of youth into the figurative "disease" of "pagan life" under the influence of their parents. The language thus manages IRS mortality rates, first by invoking a fiction of neglect predicated on diseased intergenerational inheritance, and second by rendering this disease a figurative representation of Indigenous culture that "proves," in this fallacious logic, that Indigenous communities endanger Indigenous children. The tubercular

deaths of Indigenous children then emerge as a slippery signifier, simultaneously referring to physical *and* racial/spiritual disease within a cultural pseudomemory of children threatened by their home communities.

Writing home to his young daughter from the same 1899 Indian Affairs trip that Stan Dragland speculates might have inspired “The Mission of the Trees” (*Floating Voice* 188n3), Scott explains that “I have seen a great many little girls and boys since I left home but most of them have been Indian boys and girls” (12). This is, of course, a personal letter to a child rather than a published essay; however, his use of the word *but* provides a provocative entry point into the fiction of neglect that emerges from “Indian Affairs, 1867-1912.” He places “Indian boys and girls” in a different category from white Elizabeth, gesturing toward the fraught position of the Indian child in early-twentieth-century IRS discourse. Turning to Scott’s poetic depictions of the deaths of Indigenous children illuminates how such a characterization participates in the discursive configuration of deaths in Indian residential schools in order to ensure the continued legitimacy of the IRS system within non-Indigenous public perception.

As Abley, Dragland, and others observe, death and grief are key themes across Scott’s poetry, Abley noting that “loss could be relied upon to spur him into song” (109). Scott’s depictions of dead and dying Indigenous children thus emerge from this general context of grief, producing particular tension with his profound sorrow after Elizabeth’s 1907 death at an overseas boarding school (Titley 29). But Scott’s depictions of Indigenous child mortality demand particular attention because of the ways in which these children and youth die and because of the cultural context in which their deaths are situated: a fictionalized, Anglo-determined narrative of Indigeneity projected onto the prenational Canadian landscape. Although Scott does depict some happy, well-cared-for Indigenous children,¹⁸ a striking number of “frightened,” dying, dead, or “neglected” (Edmund Morris, qtd. in Dragland, *Floating Voice* 176) young Indigenous figures appear in Scott’s Indian writings. These representations include the starving infant in “The Forsaken” whose mother uses her own flesh as bait to fish for food; the part-Scottish “girl” in “The Half-Breed Girl” who has “the heart of a frightened child” (32) and is tormented by the deadly “stifling” (29) of her dual cultural heritage; the mixed-race baby who represents his “nation’s doom” in “The Onondaga Madonna” (10); and the Indigenous chil-

dren who alliteratively “cower” and “creep” in fear of attack in “Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris” (122). In the remaining case studies, I trace the fiction of neglect as it emerges from depictions of Indigenous child/youth mortality in “The Mission of the Trees,” in which tiny Matenack dies of hunger and exposure, and “A Scene at Lake Manitou,” in which sixteen-year-old Matanack dies of an unnamed disease, likely tuberculosis (Dragland, *Floating Voice* 175), “inherited” from his father.

Dragland notes that these nearly identical names invite only a superficial comparison between poems with dissimilar forms and religious contents (*Floating Voice* 188n3), but this interpretation overlooks crucial thematic parallels. Both poems depict the death of an Indigenous child/youth as a result of well-documented causes of death in Indian residential schools: starvation, exposure after fleeing abuse (and hunger), and tuberculosis. Furthermore, Matenack and Matanack both die in the arms of Christianized parents unable to protect them, grief then catalyzing both parents’ subsequent evanescence into haunting presences in the Canadian landscape.

As noted above, “The Mission of the Trees” might build from Scott’s first treaty negotiations trip to northern Ontario (Dragland, *Floating Voice* 188n3). It was published in his 1905 *New World Lyrics and Ballads* and reprinted with small but significant revisions in his 1926 collected *Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*. My analysis focuses on the 1926 text, edited and published once Scott was fully engaged in the discursive management of the IRS system, though I will draw attention to the 1905 version where relevant.

“The Mission of the Trees” thematizes the tension between Indigenous and European cultures that catalyzes dis-ease and death for many of Scott’s Indigenous characters. Its ballad form and “sentimental” tone (Dragland, *Floating Voice* 188n3) invoke the cadence of cultural memories rehearsed through oral histories. The storytelling speaker opens the poem with an affirmation of the starvation and “cruel” climate that Scott often insisted plagued Indigenous communities, a view consistent with the progressivist racist logic of his era:¹⁹

YEARS ago one cruel winter
 So the story-makers say,
 There were fifteen Indian lodges
 Starving at Negodina. (1-4)

The ballad begins in winter, a seasonal association through which “The death of the individual, associated so closely with the cycles of nature, bears the symbolic weight of the passing of the race” (Groening 101). “YEARS ago” emphasizes the temporal distance of the narrative, while the threatening nature of the scene emerges in the harsh consonant sound of “cruel” and the wind-like “s” sound of “[s]tarving.” Variations between the 1905 and 1926 versions of the stanza emphasize the representative nature of the setting, replacing the specific reference to an “Ojibeway [sic]” community in the third line of the 1905 text with the more general “Indian.”

Crucially, the speaker’s dehumanizing language implies that the Indigenous community chose this inhospitable landscape when the “pack” “wandered for the hunting / To their wild ancestral wood” and “Left the Mission in the hollow” (10, 5-6, 7). The poem thus constructs an implicit binary between two spaces: that of the implicitly safe mission and that of the dangerous “wild ancestral wood.” Significantly, this binary also maps onto a division between a dehumanized Indigenous collective and individual Christianized subjects. The animalized “pack” is associated with the “ancestral wood,” whereas Mizigun and his son Matenack are introduced into the scene as threatened, liminal figures whose Christianization estranges them from their community. Groening notes that this tension emphasizes the trope of the doomed race by transforming a loving bond between parent and child into a tragic death (102). But by focusing on Matenack’s character rather than on Mizigun’s grief, an additional, implicit narrative emerges from this tragedy: a story of Indigenous child mortality consistent with the fiction of neglect.

The speaker establishes the purportedly violent and threatening nature of the Indigenous community early in the poem, its supposed barbarity thus serving as a foil to Matenack’s piety. The speaker emphasizes that removal from the mission places Mizigun and Matenack in peril, rendering the boy a multiply threatened figure. He is not only trapped in a “cruel” landscape of “famine” (9) but also threatened with physical assault:

“These two Christians,” — cried the pagans,
 “Breed our hunger and our woe,
 Let us kill them and their spirits,
 They are turning Wendigo.” (13-16)

The speaker constructs a brutal “pagan” community by describing its violent impulse to “kill them and their spirits,” suggesting that this collective aims to destroy not only the loving parent-child unit but also their Christianized souls. Crucially, this physically threatening presence is also enfolded into a narrative of intellectual ignorance. The community’s insistence that Mizigun and Matenack are “turning” into cannibalistic “Wendigo” suggests that the Indigenous collective misreads the basic tenets of Christianity, misrecognizing transubstantiation as cannibalism.

Once the community’s purported violence and ignorance are established, the speaker introduces the physically weakened but pious Matenack into the scene. He shares crucial parallels with Scott’s portrait of the Indigenous child always already threatened in “Indian Affairs, 1867-1912.” The speaker describes Matenack thus:

Matenack was shrunk with hunger
 And a sickness on him fell;
 “I shall not be better, father,
 Till I hear the chapel bell

At the Mission,” — there he faltered

 “Don’t you hear the bell, dear father?
 Turn and answer, bend your head.”
 Mizigun grew faint and shuddered,
 Matenack was fallen dead. (21-25, 61-64)

The grammatically correct speech indicates that Matenack, in Scott’s contorting language, has “benefit[ed]” (“Indian Affairs” 206) from a Christian education within the safe space of the mission, implicitly positioning him as a prototypical student studying in the remote church-run precursors to the residential schools. His clearly articulated sentences stand in sharp juxtaposition to the “babble wild” (18) of his community. Matenack himself recognizes the community’s inability to care for him when he insists that he will not be better until he hears the chapel bell at the mission. His movement from the safety of the mission to the “ancestral” northern wilds, then, produces a landscape-rooted cultural pseudomemory that affirms Scott’s prose narrative of the IRS student who returns to his community only to “relapse” into disease (“Indian Affairs” 206).

The speaker depicts Matenack's death in a passive voice reminiscent of Scott's descriptions of IRS mortality rates: his death completes the rhyme with his last words in lines 61 and 62, not a cry for help or an expression of pain but a call for his father to affirm the sound of the bell that signals their arrival back at the mission. The fiction of neglect, then, culminates in loving Mizigun's inability to save his child from the violence and neglect of the broader Indigenous community. The only option available to Mizigun is to fulfill his son's dying wish: to return Matenack to the IRS precursor from which he was unjustly removed. The poem thus perfidiously contends that Indigenous communities prevent even good parents from protecting their children.

When Mizigun's failed parenthood fades into an "eerie" (98) haunting in the forest, it locates the fiction of neglect within a mythologized Canadian landscape, producing a geographically rooted cultural pseudomemory in which Indigenous communities are supposedly to blame for the deaths of Indigenous children. But what of the other aspect of the fiction of neglect outlined in "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," the fictional legacy of intergenerational neglect constructed through Scott's insistence on the "well-known predisposition of Indians to tuberculosis" (206)? In "A Scene at Lake Manitou," the failure/inability of a parent to protect a child manifests itself again in the death of adolescent Matenack. Where "The Mission of the Trees" depicts a father who is unable to protect his son from the mistreatment of the Indigenous community, "A Scene at Lake Manitou" characterizes tuberculosis as an unnamed "foe" (122) that renders Widow Frederick ("Whose Indian name means Stormy Sky" [26]) powerless to save her child.

Dragland explains that the poem was likely "influenced" (*Floating Voice* 175) by two events noted in Edmund Morris's diary of and writings on his and Scott's travels through northern Ontario as members of a DIA treaty negotiations team (175-77). The first is a journal entry in which Morris mentions that they saw, in one settlement, "all alone like a wounded animal . . . a young boy dying of consumption. . . . He had no near relations and appeared frightened [neglected?]" (qtd. 176; Dragland's query). The second is Morris's now repugnant language describing, in a later newspaper article, "a squaw when her boy was dying offering up sacrifices to appease the Evil Spirit" (qtd. 176-77). Although the poem does not directly name tuberculosis as the cause of Matenack's death, these narratives, in addition to Scott's rough notes on

the “Death of a lad [?] with consumption” (qtd. 179; Dragland’s brackets), suggest TB. In this final case study, I examine how the two silent forces informing the widow’s grief — the death of wordless Matanack and the spectre of the disease that kills him — are imbricated in Scott’s fiction of neglect.

The double-edged vocabulary through which the speaker describes Widow Frederick’s parenting implicitly undermines her authority as a caregiver:

To his inherited store
 She had added all her lore;
 He was just sixteen years old
 A hunter crafty and bold;
 But there he lay,
 And his life with its useless cunning
 Was ebbing out with the day.

 She knew it was all in vain;
 He was slain by the foe
 That had slain his father. (53-59, 121-23)

On the one hand, the speaker emphasizes that Widow Frederick has carefully supplemented Matanack’s racial “inherited store” of knowledge with “all her lore.” On the other, this teaching has not produced a pious, Christianized youth such as Matenack but a “crafty” and “cunning” young man. This language implicitly impugns his subsistence “hunter” lifestyle. In late-Victorian and contemporary usage, “crafty” and “cunning” refer to both useful skills and deceptive or manipulative capacities (“crafty,” def. 1-3; “cunning,” n., esp. def. 5, *OED*). Consequently, the poem implies that the widow’s parenting has prevented Matanack from fully assimilating the Christian education that he has received, producing an inherently flawed character.

The speaker constructs this “inherited” knowledge as inseparable from the intergenerationally inherited disease that kills Matanack, producing a narrative consistent with the fiction of neglect in which the boy is literally killed by his racial identity.²⁰ Significantly, this characterization further derogates Widow Frederick’s caregiving authority, suggesting that her interpretation of the disease as a “foe” rather than a metaphor for Indigenous culture misreads the root cause of her son’s death: her own community. Consequently, the poem characterizes

Widow Frederick as not only powerless to protect her son and teetering on the edge of psychosis after his death (99-110) but also fundamentally lacking an understanding of, and therefore the ability to treat, her son's illness, again emphasizing the fallacious fiction of Indigenous youth always already threatened through relationships with their families. In a striking parallel with Scott's prose arguments, the poem asserts that neither Indigenous adults nor their lived cultural memories and knowledges are capable of providing Matanack with the skills and "education" that he needs to "develop" what Scott referred to as "the great natural intelligence of the race" in his adult life ("Indian Affairs" 206). "A Scene at Lake Manitou" thus projects a cultural pseudomemory of Indigeneity in which the community's "inherited store" can only produce the boy's death.

The fiction of neglect that emerges from depictions of Indigenous child mortality in "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," "The Mission of the Trees," and "A Scene at Lake Manitou" is a disturbing transposition of the DIA's protracted campaign to reframe high death rates within the IRS system under and beyond Scott's leadership. It is a multiple signifier, referring simultaneously to the violent assault of a supposedly "savage" community on its own children, the supposed incapacity of Indigenous parents to protect their children from the ravages of disease and community deprivation, and an assimilationist interpretation of historical progressivism in which "Indianness" is always already diseased and dying — indeed, self-destructing. By displacing the reports of death and neglect in Indian residential schools onto a romanticized and historically distant Canadian landscape and placing the burden of guilt and grief directly onto the shoulders of fictionalized violent communities and powerless parents, these writings construct an English Canadian cultural pseudomemory of Indigenous child mortality in which the primary threat to Indigenous children exists not in "the mission," but in the "wild ancestral wood" and the bodies and communities of Indigenous people.²¹ The predominance of Scott's fiction of neglect across both his non-fictional and his fictional writings on Aboriginal affairs thus undermines attempted divisions between poetry and policy. Making this claim does not mean that I situate Indigenous child mortality in the Indian poems as a didactic affirmation of policy little better than DIA propaganda. Rather, I propose that the fiction of neglect is ideo-

logically more subtle and insidious. The implicit challenge that Scott's writings present to reports of IRS violence, both intentional abuse and de facto neglect, reminds us that the issue is not why no one tried to call attention to the alarming violence of this system — Bryce was only one of numerous critics who tried to expose its brutality²² — but how decades of evidence were suppressed and discredited. This problem calls scholars to interrogate the manipulation and fabrication of cultural pseudomemories of Indigenous child mortality in English Canadian IRS period writing. Indeed, Scott's awareness of the wide-reaching social implications of the arts demands this critical reinterrogation. As he insisted, "It is the mission of new theories in the arts, and particularly of new theories that come to us illustrated by practice, to force us to re-examine the grounds of our preferences, and to retest our accepted dogmas" ("Poetry" 315).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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NOTES

¹ I draw my title from Scott's "At Gull Lake: August, 1810" (Scott, *Green Cloister*, l. 32).

² Scott, like many Canadian writers of his generation, found an enthusiastic American reading audience (Mount). See, for example, an 1894 review in the *Independent* lauding his "authentic" poetic depictions of Canada (rev. of *Magic House* 22).

³ I use "English Canadian" for historical accuracy since Scott's vision of Canadian identity was Anglo-normative.

⁴ I use "Indian" for historical accuracy only when referring to historical persons and/or documents and "Indigenous" in all other cases.

⁵ This distinction is especially true in light of the federal government's evasive response to the June 2015 executive summary of the report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), released while this paper was under review. The TRC was created in 2008 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and operated for six years (TRC 29).

⁶ This stance builds on Elizabeth DeLoughrey's similar caution to scholars, citing Haunani-Kay Trask's critique of a US Navy study that used scholarly work on the

“invented” (Trask 166) nature of sacred land to justify devastating “military operations” on Kaho’olawe in the Hawaiian islands (DeLoughrey 202-03).

⁷ See, for example, Bourinot: “His influence for good was felt all over Canada” (1). See also Brown (83) or Roy (142). Dagg provides a later attempt to rehabilitate Scott’s image.

⁸ The two major studies in contemporary Scott criticism are Titley’s *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, which interrogates Scott’s bureaucratic policy, and Dragland’s *Floating Voice: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Literature of Treaty 9*, which integrates literary analysis with political history. Abley similarly reads between poetry and policy, thematizing Scott’s presence in Canadian cultural memory through the gothic tropes of haunting. Other significant sources include Flood’s much-cited critique; Milloy’s broad analysis of the IRS system, including Scott’s role; and Ruffo’s essential literary critique, “Poem for Duncan Campbell Scott.”

⁹ Monkman identifies the prevalent “figure of a dying” Indigenous “child” in twentieth-century English Canadian literature but, though he does interrogate Scott’s broad engagement with the fiction of the “dying Indian race,” he does not specifically address his characterization of Indigenous children (79, 85-88).

¹⁰ See Scott to friend and literary critic E.K. Brown: “Arnold was certainly a great influence with me . . . and yet is for that matter” (181).

¹¹ In this context, “enfranchisement” refers to the removal of an individual’s Indian status. It has often been used to undermine Indigenous land rights and enforce gendered discrimination. Scott’s controversial 1920 amendment to the Indian Act gave the DIA the power to remove an individual’s Indian status without her or his consent. This amendment also mandated “compulsory” attendance at Indian schools and “criminalized” (de Leeuw 130) non-compliant parents (Titley 91).

¹² Although this conceptually accurate phrase has sometimes been attributed to Scott in recent years, it is actually a paraphrase that appears in Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology and the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Abley 36). Abley notes that the original wording is from US Army and residential schools official Richard Henry Pratt, who infamously stated, “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”

¹³ The frequency with which this statement is quoted — often without a citation when it appears in newspapers — is indicative of Scott’s prominence for many Canadians as a symbol of the genocidal (sometimes described as the softer “culturally genocidal”) intent motivating the IRS system. Citations include Abley (64).

¹⁴ As Scott insists in “Indian Affairs, 1867-1912,” “the government has discharged to the present every promise which was made to the Indians . . . in a spirit of generosity” (192).

¹⁵ These critiques first appeared in the late nineteenth century (Milloy 85). Additionally, a 1909 US study linked immunodeficiency and susceptibility to TB to the emotional/psychological distress of students in “non-reservation schools” (Milloy 97-98). See Milloy (Chapters 5-7).

¹⁶ See also “The Red Indian,” which glosses the deaths by explaining simply that “the older school buildings are gradually being replaced by modern structures . . . built with the sense of civic pride which should always influence the establishment of public institutions” (286).

¹⁷ Abley also discusses Scott’s use of passive voice in another document (88).

¹⁸ See, for example, the letter to Elizabeth quoted above: “They [Indian boys and girls] were very well and strong for the most part. . . . They have not as many kinds of food as you have . . . but they seem to thrive on what they have. . . . The mothers are very good to them” (12).

¹⁹ Scott also argued that substandard hygiene in postcontact settlements produced high TB rates. See, for example, “The Last of the Indian Treaties” (88-89) and “The Aboriginal Races” (323). As with his IRS rhetoric, these depictions are inconsistent.

²⁰ Some scholars speculate about Matanack’s father’s race (Dragland, *Floating Voice* 180-82). In the absence of textual decisiveness, I base my reading on the poem’s emphasis on Matanack’s Indigeneity.

²¹ Thank you to Marlene Goldman for suggesting “bodies” here.

²² Milloy documents these attempts extensively. Thanks again to Marlene Goldman for suggesting this addition to the sentence.

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