Canadian Literature and English Studies in the Canadian University

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The history of English studies in Canada is, as it is elsewhere, the history of a struggle, but it has been a different struggle in Canada than elsewhere. Terry Eagleton writes that in the Victorian period, "English" was, among other things, a project designed to pacify and incorporate the proletariat, generate sympathetic solidarity between the social classes, and construct a national cultural heritage which might serve to undergird ruling-class hegemony in a period of social instability. (65)

Gauri Viswanathan, in her Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India, points out that English literary studies were founded in India before they became entrenched in the British university curriculum. As Orientalism went West, English literary studies came East, both in the ideological service of the Empire. In India, English studies obviously performed a different role from the one they played later in England. In England, as Brian Doyle points out, "before 1880 most teaching of languages and literature was either associated with women, or allied to the utilitarian pursuit of functional literacy, and therefore occupied a dramatically lower cultural status than the upper-class masculine studies of Classics and Mathematics" (2). In the colonies, English studies substituted for prestigious Latin and Greek studies, setting in place an idealized form of British culture to which colonials might aspire. Clearly, neither the English nor the Indian model can be assumed wholly to explain the Canadian situation.

The function of English literary studies in Canada cannot be interpreted purely in terms of the goals of the Canadian elite, since the main institutional and ideological structures of these studies came from elsewhere. Neither can English studies be seen simply as cover for an act of conquest, since their main proponents in Canada were Canadian. Similarly, the marginal position of Canadian literature in the curriculum cannot simply be interpreted either as evidence of the weakness of the Canadian élite or as proof of the literature's abysmal quality, since American literature is marginal in the American university curriculum.

In fact, English studies were not only used in Canada for many of the reasons they were used in Britain, but were also adapted to the needs of specifically local struggles, for example those aimed at distinguishing Canadians from the Americans and the British, and, that done, at keeping control of Canadian universities out of their hands. As Viswanathan points out, a curriculum should be studied primarily as a "vehicle of acquiring and exercising power," rather than as "content" (167). Arnoledian English studies in Canada became a vehicle for a secularized moral training that avoided the factional religious sectarianism that had characterized the history of education before 1870. But the use of English studies to inculcate national distinctiveness is more important to consider in explaining the history of Canadian literature in the university. In formulating a policy for the reform of British education, Matthew Arnold drew on a pre-existing discourse of nationalism that is most fruitfully traced to German romantic nationalism. This discourse profoundly influenced a wide range of thinkers and underlay both the structure and the assumptions of the literary histories that were widely used in Canadian universities in the generation before 1880 (see Fee 36–38, 206).

A fundamental (and highly problematic) tenet of European romantic nationalist ideology is that national cultural greatness validates national sovereignty. A second tenet is that national cultures develop through an organic process beginning with infancy and moving towards maturity. Once this enviable maturity is reached, the nation is ready to take an equal place in the ranks of the older cultures. This view was highly appealing not only to European ethnic groups separated by boundaries based on princely marriages rather than the culture (or wishes) of their peoples, but also to colonials aspiring for more independence.

Arnoledian humanism dominated Canadian literary thinking so thoroughly and for so long that it is difficult to see how Canadians used it for their own purposes. What might from this distance look like the complete capitulation of Canadians to a European discourse, however, was adapted for resistance. Canadian writers on literature used Arnold's ideas to resist the domination of Canadian universities by non-Canadians, since Canadians, it was consistently argued, all
other things being equal, were better qualified than anyone else to recognize and foster the tender shoots of a nascent literature. The writers’ action resembles the broader action of Canadian imperialists, who, as Carl Berger points out in *The Sense of Power*, argued for a renewed British imperialism that would transfer power from the centre out to the settler colonies. Many of those involved in the debate over English studies in Canada were also imperialists, most notably George Grant, principal of Queen’s University. As George Ross, Ontario’s minister of education when the first professor of English was appointed at the University of Toronto, expressed it, “There is no antagonism ... between Canadianism and imperialism” (qtd. in Berger 259).

Canadian literary debates often take place in a historical vacuum; until recently, studies relevant to the understanding of English in Canada were scarce. In fact, the angry or despairing tone of works such as Robin Mathews’s and James Steele’s *The Struggle for Canadian Universities* (1969), the publications of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission) (1949–51), and T.H.B. Symons’s *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (1975) have led some to the incorrect conclusion that Canadian literature was not widely taught at the high-school or university level before the 1960s. In fact, just as English literary studies were a less prestigious alternative to classics in Britain, so Canadian literature became a less prestigious variant of English studies, taught in primary and secondary schools to develop patriotism and to assist in conforming immigrants to a nationalist norm. Canadian literature also found a place on the curriculum of the major universities well before 1960.

Canadian literature was first taught at a postsecondary institution in Canada in 1907: it was the subject of a summer course at the Macdonald Institute, an affiliate of the Ontario Agricultural College. Canadian literature began, in 1910, to appear regularly in the institute’s calendars “as part of a second year English course for diploma and B.S.A. students” (Sadek and Funston 29). In 1907–08, Susan Cameron taught a course on American and Canadian literatures at McGill University. In 1919–20, Acadia and the University of Manitoba put Canadian literature on the curriculum. The 1920s produced a spate of courses: they were established at Bishop’s, the University of British Columbia, Dalhousie, Mount Allison, Queen’s, Western, and Wesley College in Winnipeg. The University of Toronto first offered Canadian literature in 1934–35 as part of a course on American and Canadian literatures; the first full course was taught there in 1956–57, but was “not available to students whose major interest was in English” (Harris 120) and was allotted only one hour a week. McMaster began a course in 1941–42, the universities of New Brunswick and Saskatchewan started full courses in 1943–46, and the University of Alberta established its first course in 1952–53. These courses were often half courses, and were rarely devoted solely to Canadian literature. They were not necessarily taught every year, some were offered only to senior honours students and others only to those not specializing in English, and all were very definitely optional. Nonetheless, most survived until another surge of nationalism in the 1960s revitalized Canadian literature as an academic subject. To understand the origins and history of these courses, it is important to understand the history of the discipline into which they were inserted.

The introduction of English literary studies to Canadian universities as a separate discipline began in 1884 with the appointment of W.J. Alexander to the chair of English at Dalhousie University (he took a chair at the University of Toronto five years later). Very quickly, similar chairs were founded and filled in the major universities. The power of the men who held these chairs (for 30 years each, on average) and of the ideology that inspired them explains why, in Robin Harris’s words, “the approach to English studies which by 1890 characterized higher education in Canada continued to be the dominant one for the next seventy years — to 1960” (3).

The heads of Canadian English departments in this first generation were usually Canadian, and most had been granted their first degrees by Canadian universities. But Canadian or not, the majority had gone either to Britain or the United States for their graduate education, and thus were educated in British or American cultural discourses by teachers who knew nothing of Canadian literature. However, it is unwise to assume that these Canadians were always completely indoctrinated by their graduate studies. Gerald Graff and Michael Warner identify the major struggle in English studies in the United States as that between the “philologists and belles-lettres” (6), that is, the scientifically inclined philologists, educated in Germany and later dominant at Harvard and Johns Hopkins, and the Arnoldian humanists. In Canada, the new heads of English departments were overwhelmingly Arnoldian in their views, even though Alexander, one of the most influential of them, had done postdoctoral studies in
Germany, and several others had doctorates from Harvard or Johns Hopkins. Patricia Jasen links the victory of humanism to the Canadian view of American culture as science dominated, utilitarian, and materialistic:

[Canadian English professors] tended to be conservative in outlook and distrustful of democracy in varying degrees, and several of them promoted the imperial connection as Canada's best protection against the encroachment of American materialism and social disorder — symbolized, for them, in the excesses of the academic revolution. ("Arnoldian Humanism" 554–55)

Henry Hubert and W.F. Garrett-Petts characterize the move towards Arnold-inspired literary studies as a move away from a broader curriculum that included rhetoric, philology, literary history, and composition. This move was the result, in their view, of

the devaluing of rhetorical theory and practice as a result of late-Victorian idealism, the devaluing of literary theory itself owing to the emphasis on the "literary experience" in which the reader's emotions "vibrate in sympathy" with the writer's spirit . . . and, finally, the resistance to American influence. . . . (27)

In fact, the move may well have been as much related to the resistance of the Canadian middle class to an English model of education as to its resistance to American values. As R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar point out in Inventing Secondary Education: The Rise of the High School in Nineteenth-Century Ontario, the middle classes resisted private grammar schools that focused on teaching the classics and succeeded in establishing public coeducational schools that focused on English. This struggle was going on at the same time as the struggle for the establishment of English-studies programs at the universities. Since the universities provided the examiners, and thus determined much of the academic curriculum for the high schools, the two debates were firmly intertwined. The Canadian public high school, as Gidney and Millar point out, remained impervious to progressive forces, "for nearly a hundred years until the early 1960s" (319), the same period the university English curriculum was dominated by Arnoldianism. The university and the high school (when it came to administering the grades above grade ten) were highly selective institutions serving the middle and upper classes. However reliant the rhetoric used to promote them may have been on Arnold, they were neither British nor American, but adapted to serve particularly Canadian class interests.

Steeped in the Arnoldian belief that only "the best" should be promoted, the holders of Canadian English department chairs were unlikely to support a demand for more than a token introduction of Canadian literature into the curriculum. Very few, however, completely ignored Canadian literature or were actively hostile to it. Many of those involved in early debates about English studies in Canada took it for granted that the role of the university was not necessarily to teach Canadian literature but, rather, by teaching in an inspiring manner the best of English literature, to encourage undergraduates to write. As Arthur Phelps recalls, "When Pelham Edgar read and talked about it, poetry and the practice of poetry seemed to become the noblest and most necessary occupation in the world. So we all tried to become poets!" (qtd. in Jasen, "Arnoldian Humanism" 561). Thus the staunch Arnoldianism of these intellectuals (it can be traced, for example, through Pelham Edgar to E.K. Brown and Northrop Frye, and Frye carried it into the 1950s and 1960s) can be seen as a Canadian nationalist response to American approaches. English studies were helping to demarcate national boundaries; that they could do so meant that Canadians did not need to construct a national literature to perform this role, at least not until the 1960s.

An analogy can be drawn between events of the 1880s and the 1960s, periods when changes in and expansion of the curriculum opened up new teaching posts. In both periods, university administrators could easily have filled all these new posts with qualified American or British candidates. In the early period, since doctoral degrees in English were not granted by Canadian universities, applicants were expected to have either a master's degree from one of the top British universities or a doctoral degree, which, in practice, usually was American. Canadians with these qualifications were scarce. However, in the 1880s, despite widespread apprehension that Canadians would be passed over, qualified Canadians were generally appointed to Canadian departments of English.

Discussion of the issue of employing Canadian professors had been heated and public, in newspapers and literary magazines, for a long time, especially, and not surprisingly, among Canadian intellectuals. Writers and critics pressed for the presence of poetry, and poets, in
Canadian universities, with the aim of inspiring undergraduates to produce a great national literature. Charles G.D. Roberts wrote, in 1883, that "If Canadian universities suffer our literature to develop apart from their sympathy and guidance, will they not appear to despise their birthright? Should not the nation's intellectual life centre in her universities?" (245). Wilfred Campbell, as usual, put it more abrasively:

"Those who desire to build up Canada's future as an independent nation may see too late the folly of ignoring her rising men, while our universities are being stocked with old country professors and tutors who can have no real interest in or knowledge of our nationality and literature." (35)

In 1893, Archibald Lampman suggested instituting series of university lectures by poets and men of letters. After all, literature's main function was to stimulate "the literary output of the people" and to effect a "great general advancement in culture" (275). Varsity, then an alumni-supported literary magazine at the University of Toronto, was a strong mouthpiece for national culture, and of course the graduates of that institution—the country's largest English-language university, as well as one of the few granting master's degrees—were keenly interested in keeping Canadian universities Canadian. A Varsity editorial, "The Claims of Nationality," written about the filling of the chair of English at the University of Toronto, argued that the new professor should be Canadian because his main task was "the fostering of true and high literary aspirations which will display themselves in the after-work of the students themselves" (20).

In other words, from the perspective of many Canadians, the study of English literature was a means to a nationalist end, rather than simply an end in itself.

The progress of the heated debate over the filling of the chair at University College, a chair that was funded by the City of Toronto in 1888, can be traced through Toronto newspapers published between the time the chair was announced and Alexander's appointment. A major theme in the debate was the need for the best possible man, whatever his nationality. Once a declaration in favour of the highest possible standards was made, however, the issue of nationality was invariably raised. This pattern was followed even by Daniel Wilson, the president of the University of Toronto, when, after Alexander's appointment, he replied to his attackers: "I have always advised the selection of the very best man, wherever he may have been born or educated" (Letter, 11 Feb. 1889). However, he very quickly pointed out that of ten appointments made of professors and lecturers at the University of Toronto, only one was of a non-Canadian, and seven of the ten had, in fact, graduated from that university. He then implied that in hiring Canadians the University of Toronto had done far better than its main rivals, McGill and Queen's. Three days later he corrected himself, explaining that in the interim he had received a letter from George Grant, principal of Queen's, in which Grant pointed out that seven of the ten professors in arts at Queen's were Canadian, as were all the lecturers (Letter, 14 Feb. 1889). Clearly the issue was taken seriously by university administrators, who could not fail to notice how closely their hiring practices were being scrutinized. They consistently had to balance an argument based on merit with an argument based on nationality.

These conflicting discourses, one supposedly universal, the other local, one based on abstract and supposedly measurable standards, the other on factors thought to be both political and contingent, constantly clash in colonial debates, not only about university appointments, but also about colonial culture, art, and literatures. Any Canadian intellectual familiar with one extreme of this argument (a complete condemnation of the mediocrity of things Canadian) was familiar with the other (the elevation of the national to pinnacles of greatness). Often individual writers selected their ideas from the continuum between these extremes to suit the occasion, the audience, and the context. In fact, sometimes a writer would begin a piece with a negative picture of past colonial mediocrity and end with a positive picture of future national literary glory.

However helpful such arguments might have been in getting them into the university, once safely there, nationalist professors found the argument weighted towards the negative end of the continuum by the institution's adherence to what Pierre Bourdieu terms "the ideology of disinterest" (Language 215). Edward Said writes to the same effect concerning the function of humanities in the United States: it is "to represent noninterference in the affairs of the everyday world" (qtd. in Mukherjee 23). Eagleton says that the main ideological function of the literary is to transform the political into the normal, the universal, the natural: "The literary is the vanishing point of the political, its dissolution and reconstitution into polite letters" (23).

The marginalization of Canadian literature has taken place within the ideological contexts, first of humanist idealism, and then of the
variants of New Criticism and structuralism, notably Frye's theories, that succeeded it in many Canadian English departments. The disinterestedness praised in humanist idealism came closer to scientific objectivity in the other two theories, but in those two theories arguments that regard literature as inextricably embedded in a sociopolitical context were discounted. Therefore, although the study of English literature itself was never seen as political, the insistence that more or better attention should be paid to Canadian literature could always be characterized as an attempt to politicize English literature, and thus as a violation of the ideal that was central to the discipline.

The belief in an apolitical standard of greatness leads, then, to a typically colonial dilemma, which Alan Lawson has outlined with respect to both A.D. Hope, Australian critic and writer, and George Woodcock, Canadian critic and writer:

The predicament for those judges assessing the writing of the age of imminent maturity was to be sharply discriminating enough to justify their role as critics while concealing their eagerness to actually discover the Great Australian/Canadian Novel and thereby extend their legitimate activities into teaching and research. (194–95)

Their solution was often to promote the national literature in private while damning it with faint praise (or just damning it) in public. For example, the purist Alexander strongly promoted the reading, writing, and publication of Canadian literature outside the university although in 1944, the year of his death, he maintained, as he had throughout his career, that "Canada had not produced any lasting literature." Hope established the first full course in Australian literature at an Australian university in 1953; it was "an historical survey of the development of Australian writing which emphasised the few classics. It thereby affirmed how little 'good' Australian writing there was" (Lawson 196). Similarly, a major focus of the six lectures on Canadian literature that E.K. Brown delivered as part of the American and Canadian literature course at University College in the late 1930s was "Canadian literary sterility." Pelham Edgar probably did more to establish Canadian literature in the institutional sense than any other university professor. Yet, writing for a British audience in the Cambridge History of English Literature (1917), he wrote: "There are some novels that have honestly died, and some that have never lived. Canada's fiction may, with few exceptions, be classed in one or other of these categories" ("English-Canadian Literature" 399). In fact, Edgar was simply refusing to lower the symbolic value of his judgement. Just as in the debates over the hiring of Canadians, so in literary criticism the highest possible standards had to be invoked before anything could be said about Canadian literature that would have any serious impact. Here is one of Edgar's most detailed variants of the ritual invocation of standards, written, for an American audience this time, in 1919:

The reasonable reader . . . would wish to be assured that the critical opinions, which in a brief essay must seem so peremptory, proceed neither from too charitable a regard for the efforts of an adolescent art, nor on the other hand from too harsh an estimate of the value of minor poetry. I would rather satisfy the demands of such a reader than tickle the vanity of a multitude of expectant poets. Consequently, at the risk of being thought ungenerous and unsympathetic, I will discuss the work of our better writers with reference to standards of absolute rather than of relative merit. ("Canadian Poetry" 120)

The higher up the ladder of prestige Canadians went, the more likely they were to find themselves in contexts where to promote Canadian literature without acknowledgement of the hierarchy of prestige would be to invite dismissal, even ridicule. Thus all the important academic critics who wrote on Canadian literature carefully demonstrated their deference to standards, especially when writing for an international audience.

For Canadians, the trick was to use "Britishness" as a way of fending off the Americans without moving too far towards the British view of matters. Often, Canadian élites maintained the delicate balance by a strategic deployment of just enough Canadian nationalism to maintain control of Canadian institutions, but not so much that they would lose the necessary credibility with homologous British and American élites, whose approval and respect was vital, given Canada's dominated position. In other words, Canadian university graduates needed to know enough about their own culture to recognize that they had at least the beginnings of a literature, that essential prerequisite for nationality, but even more important, they had to be able to situate it in a hierarchy (a hierarchy replicated in the Canadian curriculum) that placed it third, after British and
American literature. What all the discussion of standards obscures is that this hierarchy reflects differentials based on symbolic and real power and preempts any careful examination of the actual literature in favour of prefabricated generalization.

This struggle of the competing discourses of the best and the national, the universal and the local, beset Canadian literary criticism for decades, and the resulting ambivalence weakened those who were in the best position, in institutional terms, to promote Canadian literature. The problem was exacerbated by weaknesses in publishing and in the academy that persist today. First, the English-speaking areas of Canada generally relied, and to a large extent still do rely, on British and American publishers for reading material and textbooks. More importantly for this paper, Canadian universities have only just recently stopped depending on British and American universities to train faculty to fill positions in Canadian English departments. In the past, many Canadians who went to the United States for graduate education stayed there. Even Pelham Edgar, without whom the history of Canadian literature in Canada would be almost unimaginable, “had eager eyes on professorships at American universities” when he graduated from Johns Hopkins (M. Sandra Campbell 44). Further, since most English departments until recently were quite small, qualified Canadians often could not find work at home. Frequently they went to the United States to teach at universities where the incentive to write about Canadian literature was slight and the opportunity to teach it nonexistent. Many took up other professions. Among those who left Canada and who had written, sometimes extensively, on Canadian literature, were Charles G.D. Roberts, John D. Logan, Lionel Stevenson, Douglas Bush, A.J.M. Smith, E.K. Brown, Hugh Kenney, and Leon Edel.

The absence from Canadian universities of many good and influential teachers and critics with a strong interest in the field meant that Canadian students did not work or graduate under them. Ironically, and perhaps inevitably, professors who had received academic recognition mainly for the work they had done in areas other than Canadian literature — for example, Pelham Edgar, who taught both E.K. Brown and Northrop Frye, and then later Frye himself — provided such a tradition. Precisely because of the status of their institutional or class positions (Edgar was as close to an aristocrat as Canadians come) or the prestige of their academic fields and their writing, they could risk investing some of their symbolic capital in Canadian literature. Despite the efforts of these men, there was a “brain drain” to the United States that resulted in a scarcity in Canada of institutionally powerful critics and academics prepared to reinforce the discourse of Canadian literature or to put it on the curriculum as an academic subject.

Nor was this discourse effectively reproduced from one generation to the next. Between 1921 and 1946, according to Canadian Graduate Degrees in the Humanities and Social Sciences, only about 5 percent of the total number of graduate degrees granted in English went to students who had written a thesis on Canadian literature (601, 32). Only three of the degrees in Canadian literature granted between 1921 and 1946 were doctoral degrees, which is not surprising, since before 1950 the University of Toronto was the only English-language Canadian university granting doctoral degrees in English. (The University of Toronto granted only 32 doctoral degrees between 1920 and 1952 [Harris 91, 131].) Further, Symons notes in his report that “post-graduate study of Canadian literature during the 1960s did not keep pace with the expansion of graduate studies in other fields of literature...” (43).

Romantic-nationalist beliefs underlie the assumptions implicit in much discussion of Canadian literary studies that some day the English curriculum in Canada will be dominated by Canadian literature just as the English curriculum in Britain is dominated by British literature. However, what is happening to the English curriculum in practice does not match these assumptions: it is arguable that of all the literature courses taught at Canadian universities, the percentage of those devoted to Canadian literature (once such courses were finally introduced) has always remained about the same (that is, somewhere between 5 and 10%). Moreover, Canadian literature has, for the past 20 years at least, been receiving the kind of critical and scholarly attention that has established the greatness of other literatures, and yet new courses are rarely added once the basic survey courses are in place. The concept that colonies require a period of cultural infancy has provided the conservatives in the discipline of English literature with an apparently interminable breathing space. Canadian literature seems unlikely to catch up, since the canonized British authors do not fade away and die, but are constantly rejuvenated to suit the times. “Not yet quite good enough” was still the cry when Henry Kreisel reached the University of Alberta in 1950, fresh from writing a paper on A.M. Klein for the course on American and Canadian literature offered at the University of Toronto: “Canada was a young country, there was not sufficient material for a full-year
course, our literature wasn’t yet quite good enough” (179). The point is that, given the history both of the institution of English studies in Canada and of the ideology current in the university, Canadian literature is unlikely ever to be “quite good enough” to dominate the curriculum. Just as foreign literatures (Latin and Greek) served to distinguish the British cultural élite, so a foreign literature (British) serves to distinguish the postcolonial cultural élite. All that appears to be required is a body of cultural knowledge that allows for class distinction within the country and for élite recognition and communication outside it. The less culture specific and practical it is, the better. As Bourdieu puts it, “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar . . .” (Distinction 6). He points out that the upper classes favour the “pure aesthetic . . . [which] takes the bourgeois denial of the social world to its limit” (5). Clearly, Canadian literature, compared to British literature, European literature, or the classics, is too new, too politically involved, and insufficiently consecrated by literary-critical work to serve the function of class distinction on its own.15

These factors — ideological, institutional, and material — explain why a tradition of teaching and research in Canadian literature developed so slowly, and why the subject was admitted to the university curriculum so reluctantly. Often it received short shrift from professors who themselves had not studied it as students. Canadian literature did not encompass the best of what had been thought and said, and the implication, surely not lost on students, was that it never would. The passage of time may have reduced the numbers of those prepared to claim that Canadian literature is still not good enough, but it has markedly increased the status of Canadian literary studies or its proponents, who have been characterized in a recent article by Lawrence Mathews as, at least during the 1970s, “in constant need of justifying [their] existence to powerful colleagues who regarded their own work as . . . more ‘rigorous,’ ‘disciplined,’ ‘sophisticated,’ and ‘precise’ ” (164).

The persistent marginalization of Canadian literature in the English curriculum continues to have dispiriting effects on both its teachers and its students. Several of the factors that might support a change in this situation are currently absent. Even during periods when nationalism was the favoured position of a broad section of the Canadian élite — that is, during the 1920s and the mid-1960s to early 1970s — the progress of Canadian literature in the university curriculum was barely perceptible. After all, Canadian literature was inserted into an institution that already had its hierarchy in place: Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton still rule. The curriculum has a long-established structure with only a small amount of give, in both ideological and logistical terms. Change in favour of Canadian literature seems unlikely, because since the mid-1970s the traditional anti-American and federalist forms of Canadian nationalism have been rendered, if not untenable, at least highly problematic by the rise of transnational economic pressures, Quebec nationalism, and multicultural immigration. However, this lowering of Canada's nationalist temperature has made it possible to reconsider the effects of nationalist ideology on English studies.

It is time to reexamine the English curriculum, this time from a postcolonial and Canadian perspective rather than an Old World one. After all, nationalism brought Canada into being and, subsequently, oppressed it; to aspire to a monolithic nationalism, in a culture far more complex even than those of the Old World, may well be profoundly destructive. Much of the weakness in both general books and survey courses on Canadian literature may be attributed to the fact that they promote master narratives of the nation that ignore regional, ethnic, Native, and female difference. The discourse of English studies in Canada may have been deployed nationalistically to resist foreign domination, but it was also used within the country as a vehicle for social control. Helen Tiffin has noted how it is the comparison between two or more postcolonial literatures and British literature that is the most revealing:

texts from other post-colonial countries enabled me to see the relationship between British literature and ours in counter-discursive rather than filiastic terms; they led me to scrutinize the British tradition and the myth of its 'universality'; to investigate the collusion of education, publishing and criticism in our continuing colonisation. (121)

Monolithic generalizations survive an insistently historicized and comparative methodology only with difficulty, especially when this methodology denaturalizes Canadian culture by forcing us to realize that it is neither wholly distinctive (the nationalist position) nor wholly derivative (the colonialist position). The opposition between "absolute standards" and "Canadian" will continue to rule Canadian
literary debates unless cultural critics begin to articulate the complex interactions between power, prestige, and quality. For a long time, colonial literatures have shared the slot in the hierarchy that is filled by folk culture in Old World institutions, and those who wished to display literary judgement or succeed at the university had to repeatedly demonstrate that they knew the place of such literatures, and their own, in the overall scheme of things. In return for the symbolic capital represented by elite class tastes, most university professors were prepared to downplay their national affiliations. Given this scheme's foundation in powerful political, social, and economic structures, it seems naïve to suggest that understanding it will lead to change. Understanding it, however, might at least make us less naïve about the role and function of literature, especially Canadian literature, in Canadian universities and the wider culture.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English for the opportunity to deliver this paper at their annual conference in May 1992. I received many helpful comments; Pamela McCallum's remark that Arnoldianism was adapted to nationalist purposes by many Canadians was particularly useful. I would also like to thank the students of Canadian Literature: Theory, History, Method for discussing this material with me, particularly Paul Milton, whose paper on the career of James Cappon filled in several gaps in my knowledge.

2 For an excellent bibliography, see Murray. Dissertations by Campbell, Hubert, Jasen, and Lawson add depth to earlier studies.

3 Henry Kreisel, for example, in a widely disseminated article published in Canadian Literature in 1984, remarks, "it was not until the 1960s that formal courses in our own literature became standard offerings in our universities" (180). Canadian literature was routinely included in texts for schools. (For example, Literary Selections for Advanced Classes in Public and High Schools, published in 1901, contains poems by John Reade, Charles G.D. Roberts, Sir James Edgar, and Theodore Harding Rand.) One of the anthologies used to introduce Canadian literature to immigrants was compiled by John D. Robins, who taught English at the University of Toronto (A Pocketful of Canada [1948]).

4 To decide which course was first, one must first define course. No course was taken into account in my research unless it appeared in a calendar as a regular course (half or full) with the words Canadian Literature in the title. No attempt was made to estimate the quantity of Canadian literature taught in such courses, the number of students they had, or even whether they actually were taught every year they were listed. It is extremely difficult to get accurate information about early courses without engaging in extensive research in the relevant university archives. Most of my information was derived from the collection of university calendars at the University of Toronto Library; some of the runs are broken and some universities, notably the University of New Brunswick, are not represented. Further, the amount of information given in calendars varies from institution to institution and from time to time. Finally, calendars do not always accurately reflect what was actually taught in any given year. University histories do not normally devote much space to English studies. Histories, such as the one Robin Harris did for the University of Toronto, could usefully be done, especially for the earlier institutions. I thank Professor Diana Brydon and archivist Nancy Sadek, both of the University of Guelph, for their help with my research on early courses at the Ontario Agricultural College.

5 For more detailed information on these courses, including information on who taught them, controversies surrounding their founding, and the books they covered, see Fee (200–36).

6 John D. Logan also received a doctorate from Harvard, and although he never taught on a long-term basis at a Canadian university, he wrote many influential books and articles on Canadian literature, and played an important role in the founding of study programs in that field at both Acadia and Dalhousie. He also delivered a series of lectures on Canadian literature at Acadia in 1913 (see Foshey).

Information requisite for the study of the history of university-level Canadian literature courses is still fairly sketchy. It would be useful to know how courses were inaugurated, under which heads, who taught these courses, what was taught to what numbers and categories of students how often and for how long. The list that follows provides information only for selected institutions; information for some universities or university colleges either could not be found, or, once found, could not be checked. However, it shows where the first professors of English at ten universities and two university colleges were educated, and the relationship of the periods of their employment at these institutions to the timing of the introduction of Canadian literature. In cases where the first professor left or died before 1910, a successor is listed. The first dates given in each entry indicate the beginning and end of the professor's career at the specified university; the second date indicates the first formal introduction of a Canadian course (or part course) listed in that university curriculum. Acadia: Vernon Rhodeneize, BA (University of Manitoba), PhD (Harvard), 1919–53, 1919; University of Alberta: E.K. Broadus, BA (George Washington), MA (University of Chicago), PhD (Harvard), 1908–36, 1952; Dalhousie: W.J. Alexander, BA, MA (University of London), PhD (Johns Hopkins), 1884–89,
1923, succeeded by Archibald MacMechan, BA, MA (University of Toronto), PhD (Johns Hopkins), 1889-1933, 1923; McGill: Charles Moyse, BA (University of London), 1879-1920, 1907; Manitoba: A.W. Crawford, BA, MA (University of Toronto), PhD (Cornell), 1909-30, 1919; Mount Allison: William Morley Tweedie, BA (Mount Allison), MA (University of London), 1887-1937, 1938; Ontario Agricultural College (later University of Guelph); J.B. Reynolds, MA (University of Toronto), 1893-1915, succeeded by O.J. Stevenson, BA, MA, D Paed. (University of Toronto), 1916-40, 1910; Queen's: James Cappon, BA, MA (University of Glasgow), 1888-1919, 1921; University of Saskatchewan: Reginald Bateman, MA (Trinity College, Dublin), 1909-15, succeeded by R.A. Wilson, MA, PhD (Queen's), 1915-40, 1945; University of British Columbia: G.G. Sedgewick, BA (Dalhousie), MA, PhD (Harvard), 1920-48, 1925; University of Toronto, University College: W.J. Alexander, BA, MA (University of London), PhD (Johns Hopkins), 1889-1926, 1934; University of Toronto, Victoria College: Pelham Edgar, BA (Toronto), PhD (Johns Hopkins), 1902-38, 1934.

The number of department heads who wrote books, not to mention articles, on Canadian literature, or compiled Canadian anthologies, is far greater than the number of heads whose departments had Canadian literature on their curricula. Cappon, for example, wrote two books on Charles G.D. Roberts and one on Bliss Carman, E.K. Broadus compiled a widely used anthology, while Edgar produced a stream of articles, reviews, and encyclopaedia entries. Alexander consistently included Canadian literature in the anthologies that he compiled for high schools; these were first published in the early 1920s.

Paul Litt notes that E.V. Buffle's "The Massey Report and the Intellectuals: Tory Cultural Nationalism in the 1950s," an MA thesis completed at the University of Manitoba in 1979, traces Arnoldian views through the work of influential Canadian thinkers, including George Grant, Northrop Frye, and Robertson Davies (254n6).

This controversy reveals a great deal about nationalism and attitudes to education in Ontario, and deserves more attention than I can give it here. I thank Heather Murray for directing me to important letters in the Toronto Daily Mail.

The 1989-90 net sales figure for Canadian paperback titles was $25.5 million; for foreign titles it was $34.8 million (Lorinc). The Canadian book market was dominated by imported books in the nineteenth century (see Parker, esp. 210-60) and still is (for recent decades, see Secretary of State, esp. 217-18).

University College, at the University of Toronto, had one of the largest English departments in the country throughout this period; it had two members in 1903. Between 1926 and 1944 it held steady at seven. In 1960, it had sixteen members (Harris 51, 78, 109).

Statistical information on Canadian literature courses can be found in Stewart (for 1962-73), Bennett, Symons (both for the early 1970s), and Neuman (mainly for 1991-92). Symons comments that courses on Canadian literature "constituted a relatively constant proportion (6%-10%) of departmental offerings" (40). Stewart takes into account courses that were entirely devoted to Canadian literature and those that were only partially devoted to it; Canadian literature formed more than 6 percent of the total English course offerings at only two universities: Brandon and Carleton. Neuman finds that Canadian literature courses currently make up 9.1 percent of the total English course offerings (4). None of these studies takes into account either the number of sections taught of a particular course or the number of students taking it. Pacey assumes that numbers are constantly on the rise: "Much of this development has of course taken place in the last decade. For example, the enrolment in the undergraduate Canadian literature course at Dalhousie, which stood at 21 in 1962-63, has reached 96 for the current academic year — thus growing six times in ten years" (68). However, M.G. Parks notes that enrolment in this course in 1923-24 was 16, and in 1924-25 it was 38 (vii). Many factors affect enrolment, including course requirements and the skill of the professor, not to mention less local factors. The minutes of the 1931 meeting of the Canadian Authors' Association record Rhodenizer's statement that the regular course in Canadian literature at Acadia had at times over 60 students registered (16).

13 The ideas of Pierre Bourdieu have been very influential on this paper. Rather than attempt to explain terms such as "distinction" or "symbolic capital," I refer readers to Bourdieu himself, or to Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes, who provide a useful overview of his work.

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