# TECHNOLOGIES OF REMEMBRANCE: LITERARY CRITICISM AND DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT'S "INDIAN POEMS"

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis conceptualizes literary criticism as a "technology of remembrance." It works with the theory of "remembrance/pedagogy" which proposes that all remembrance acts are inherently pedagogical. This thesis argues that Canadian literary criticism engages various public remembrance/pedagogies of the history of First Nations-Canadian relations, as those relations have been produced historically through colonial domination. This thesis examines literary criticism, spanning from 1914 to 1996, of Duncan Campbell Scott's canonized "Indian poems." It also examines Scott's role in the department of Indian Affairs, especially from 1913 to 1932. It reads the literary readings of Scott and asks what is being remembered and forgotten about the colonial history of Canada in the remembrances of Scott? The thesis identifies and critiques three evaluative discourses in Scott literary criticism in terms of what they erase. It suggests two alternative evaluative discourses which are grounded in a counter-hegemonic view of the history of First Nations-Canadian relations.

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# Technologies of Remembrance: Literary Criticism And Duncan Campbell Scott's "Indian Poems"

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> At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess ...[Yet] neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as other forms of knowledge affiliated with domination...We must try to look carefully and integrally at the culture that nurtured the sentiment, rationale, and above all imagination of empire.
>
> (Edward Said, *Culture & Imperialism*, 1994, 5, 8 & 12)

> Most of the time when we speak of forgetting, we are speaking of displacement, or replacement, of one version of the past by another.
>
> (I. Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*, 1994, 188)

# Chapter 1

## i) Literary Criticism as Remembrance

In this project, I propose that literary criticism can be theorized as a technology of remembrance. Remembrance is produced, in other words, through the various social technologies of literary criticism such as critical practices, epistemologies, canon formations, and literature pedagogies in the academy and other institutional sites of schooling, as well as in the media. Adapting the concept of a technology of remembrance from De Lauretis' *Technologies of Gender* (1987)[1] serves to highlight the socially productive role of literary criticism in public memory on a number of levels. Who does

[1] De Lauretis adapts it from Foucault's "technology of sex" in *The History of Sexuality*.

criticism remember, first of all? And then, which criticism is remembered — criticism has its own canons — by whom, and from what political perspectives? Given that literary criticism is inherently evaluative, there is always a question of value, in two senses. First, a degree on a scale of value is ascribed to a work and to its author (major? minor? not on the scale?). Second, underlying values are used as determinants of a text or author's place on the scale. Criticism's evaluative criteria, then, are ideological in the sense of both conscious, formal beliefs of a class or other social group, as well as less conscious, less formulated beliefs and unconscious assumptions, bearings and commitments (Williams 1981, 26).

Through its forms (essays, reviews, books), its formations (literary journals, prizes, conferences), and its institutions (academia, schooling, media)[2] we can examine literary criticism as a technology of remembrance that produces narratives of history through its readings of literary texts. Literary criticism is both constitutive of and constituted by public memory. Criticism is constitutive of public memory in the sense that the content, the perspectives and the epistemological frameworks within its texts become part of the social archive.[3] In this way, literary criticism functions as a constellation of remembrances in the public domain. Literary criticism is constituted by public memory in the sense that it reads texts through pre-existing historical narratives. In

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Examining the forms, formations and institutions of cultural practices generally is a method of analysis suggested by Raymond Williams in *Culture* (1981).

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The archive "being defined as the text's social discursive presence in the world" (Said 1983, 51).

doing so, we could say that criticism works on and through the cultural "screen" in Silverman's sense (1994, 19)[4] of a repertoire of images through which difference is figured. (To Silverman's notion of a repertoire of images I would add narratives which work closely with images to produce meaning.)

My concern in this project is with the public memory of First Nations-Canadian relations as they have been — and continue to be — produced historically through the power relations of colonialism and its attendant racialized discourses. How the memory of First Nations-Canadian relations figures in and through Canadian literary criticism is a vital key to my conceptualization of criticism as a remembrance practice with a pedagogical intention and effect. In this sense, I am examining literary criticism as engaging what Simon, Rosenberg and Eppert have termed a remembrance/pedagogy. Simon, Rosenberg & Eppert suggest that remembrance/pedagogy "be understood as an infrangible couplet echoing Foucault's pivotal construction power/knowledge" (forthcoming, 2). Remembrance acts are inherently pedagogical, they argue, because "as communicative and performative acts they intend to instantiate various learnings which are never singularly achieved but always require another. That remembrance cannot be formed alone frames it within pedagogical terms" (Ibid, 3). For Simon, Rosenberg & Eppert the binding of remembrance and pedagogy "is made in the recognition that all formations of memory carry implicit and/or explicit assumptions about what is to be

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Silverman works with Lacan's notion of the screen which she defines as a "repertoire of representations by means of which our culture figures 'difference' through which social identity is inscribed" (Silverman, 19).

remembered, how, by whom, for whom, and with what potential effects" (3). Practices of remembrance are pedagogical forms also "in that they are implicated in the formation and regulation of meaning, feelings, [and] identifications" (3). I propose to work with the conceptual tool of remembrance/pedagogy to examine various learnings instantiated by literary criticism with regards to public memory of the colonial history of First Nations-Canadian relations.

Literary criticism is both reproductive and productive. To put it another way, its texts are both secondary — written in response/relation to texts that come before — and primary, in the sense that critical texts constitute a discrete formation with its own discursive regimes within the social archive. Said "rejects the secondary role usually assigned to criticism" (1983, 51). Rather than merely being commentary on and evaluation of something that has come before it — a work of art or discrete occasion — Said asserts "what the critical essay does is *to begin* to create the values by which art is judged" (1983, 52, emphasis in original). He quotes Oscar Wilde who claimed that criticism "treats the work of art as a starting point for a new creation" (52). Said agrees with Lukacs who "shows how in fact critics appropriate for themselves the function of starting to make values for the work they are judging" (52). But clearly the values by which art is judged do not originate only with the individual critic. The literary critic draws on evaluative discourses and epistemological frames that circulate within and beyond criticism.

Said's point about the originating or productive function of literary criticism is helpful to my exploration in this project of the power (or rather the power/knowledge)

exercised by criticism as a technology of remembrance of national origins, particularly in Canada as narrated in relation to traumatic histories of colonial domination. However, I think it is also important not to overlook the pervasive conception of criticism as secondary to "creative" texts, if only because it is probably the more common sense or hegemonic view. Moreover, the notion of criticism as secondary to literary texts seems to be tied to an implicit assumption within some critical texts that their evaluative criteria are found *within* the literary text itself, as though originating from a supposed transcendent meaning of art, as it were, rather than being a discursive practice with ideological underpinnings. Literary criticism, when conceived as originating from the essence of the creative work which it evaluates, has a tendency to bring its ideological freight in sideways. The evaluative framework is almost always outside of the moment of its citation, but hovers there as a kind of gatekeeper at a larger arena of cultural values. What Said's articulation of a conception of criticism as primary or as productive serves to foreground are the authorizing discourses and ideologies that literary criticism employs and normalizes. These authorizing discourses are implicated in formations of public memory of First Nations-Canadian relations.

Throughout this paper, I employ the term "First Nations-Canadian relations." This terminology signals an important political change. It reframes what has more often been termed "the Indian problem" or "the Indian question" or "the plight of the Indian." Reframing the political issues facing First Nations and Canadian societies today within the context of a relationship is significant in terms of addressing questions of justice with regards to the legacy of colonization. It serves to foreground questions of responsibility

for the terms of the relationship. The landmark report from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released in 1996 is an example of this shift in terminology and political perspective. The framework of First Nations-Canadian relations effectively reclaims the original nation-to-nation relations that characterized early contact between First Nations and Europeans, particularly as that contact was understood from a First Nations perspective (RCAP Report, Vol. 1, 3). The RCAP report calls for a necessary renewal and renegotiating of the relationship. The Commission states that it does not propose to resolve the so-called "Aboriginal problem."

> Identifying it as an Aboriginal problem inevitably places the onus on Aboriginal people to desist from 'troublesome behaviour.' It is an assimilationist approach, the kind that has been attempted repeatedly in the past, seeking to eradicate Aboriginal language, culture and political institutions from the face of Canada and to absorb Aboriginal people into the body politic — so that there are no discernible Aboriginal people and thus, no Aboriginal problem (Vol. 1, 2).

In a related vein, Dyck (1991) explains that "discussions of the Indian 'problem' revolve around a deep-rooted belief that perceived differences between Indians and other Canadians constitute a regrettable situation that needs to be remedied" (Dyck 1991, 1). Though the notion of "the Indian problem" disguises a relation, as Dyck astutely points out, the very concept of an "Indian problem" is not "an inherent condition or a 'thing,' but the underlying premise *of* a relationship" (2, emphasis added).

> As prominent partners in this relationship, Euro-Canadian attitudes and actions towards Indians are and always have been an essential part of the 'problem'... Euro-Canadians' imposition of coercive tutelage in their management of Indian affairs represents the most continuous and central element of the Indian 'problem'" (Dyck, 3).

The current social, political and economic conditions confronting Aboriginal communities and facing Canadian society as a whole need to be understood, therefore, as the product of a historical relationship of domination.

The institution of literature, including literary criticism, is a significant component of a system of "political relations, ideological claims, moral purposes and material interests" (Dyck, 29) that have constituted First Nations-Canadian relations as one of coercive tutelage. Coercive tutelage is here defined as "a form of arbitrary restraint or guardianship exercised by one party over another" (Dyck, 3). My underlying ethic for this project is that the colonialist terms of the relationship are unacceptable and need to change.

### ii) Canadian Literary Criticism and Remembrance

Thinking, more specifically, about literary criticism of canonical Canadian literature, I propose that it plays an important institutional and cultural role in producing and legitimating public memory, especially about the origins, formation and identity of "Canada" as a cultural body, an imagined community, a discursive space. The discursive space of "Canada" narrated in literary criticism also interprets and makes "sense" of material relations of power among diversely located subjects within the nation state of Canada. There has been considerable theorizing of the role of literature in the formation of national identities. Anderson, Bhabha, Said, Brennan and others have articulated that "nations, then, are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role" (Brennan in

Ashcroft et al 1995, 173). Imaginative literature has also been conceptualized as playing an influential role in the imperial expansion of Europe through its cultural forms, such as the novel, which articulate a "structure of attitude and reference" (Said 1994, 75) toward imperialism in the social worlds they represent. This is Said's argument in *Culture and Imperialism* where he asserts that we can and should read canonical Western literature as a "polyphonic accompaniment to the expansion of Europe" (1994, 60). I want to shift the emphasis to look at the role of literary criticism in this same regard. Criticism plays a significant part in articulating a structure of attitude and reference towards imperialism, to use Said's term. Criticism does this in part role through its staging of certain texts in ways that are "implicated in evoking a civic 'we' that sustains a collective identification with the nation and its ideas and values" (Simon et al, 2).

The role of criticism is in a sense always already implicit in any discussion of literature as a discipline and as an institution. The most obvious reason being that it is in the space of criticism that such discussion takes place. It is within literary criticism that the reading of literature as a reflection or a production of a national symbolic terrain emerges. If by the term "literature" we consider not only the texts defined as "literary" but the network of social practices that constitute literature broadly as an institution, which I have already mentioned, including specific institutions (academia, schooling, the media), formations (journals of criticism, literary prizes and awards), and forms (the professional essay, the book review, the student essay), then criticism is a key component of what makes literature literature as we know it (Eagleton 1983, Bennett 1990). The view of literature as expressing a special realm of human consciousness imbued with moral and

spiritual values emerged in the late eighteenth century and continues today (Eagleton 1983, Morgan 1989). In this view, some forms of writing are defined as literary and others as non-literary, and criticism plays a key role in producing and sustaining these boundaries. Terry Eagleton writes about the rise of English as a school subject historically (Eagleton 1983) and shows that the ideology of the literary and of English studies has been heavily influenced by various critics and the schools of thought the critics both produced and were a part of, such as Matthew Arnold at the turn of the twentieth century and Leavis in the 1920s.

The institutional role of education is a crucial site where criticism plays a powerful role as a remembrance/pedagogy through determining who gets read, taught and legitimized in the culture, and within what larger evaluative and ideological frameworks. As Jameson has emphasized, university students, for example, do not actually confront the text they are studying so much as they primarily confront "the *interpretation* of the text" through "previously acquired and culturally sanctioned interpretive schemes" (Jameson 1982 interview in *Diacritics*, qtd. in Bennett 1990, 206). Jameson asserts that the task of pedagogy in this circumstance is "to make those interpretations visible, as an object, as an obstacle rather than a transparency" (Ibid, 206). Students have to engage with the interpretive schemes of criticism, as well, in order to perform successfully. Jameson (1981), Morgan (1989) and Bennett (1990) have argued that literary criticism organizes the reading of literary texts such that these texts have come to be invested with an ideological function, both in terms of content and as a process in the Althusserian sense of the production of subjectivities. The other key arena

of institutionalization of the remembrance/pedagogy of literary criticism is the media, especially through its influential role in publicizing books and authors. I am not going to further discuss the sites of education and media in this project, but I want to signal their underlying importance to my analysis.

The relationship between literature and history is substantial and complex, and beyond the scope of this project to address in a sustained way. There are a few basic points that I want to make, however. First, Canadian literature has drawn and continues to draw on historical events that have taken place within the geo-political space of Canada as source for subject material and thus engages in literary representations of history. Literary narrations of the past of Canada circulate in the culture as a kind of national-historic curriculum with a remembrance/pedagogy of the founding and development of the country. These literary narrations of the past are resonant sites of identification (though not uniform across diverse social locations) and subjectivity formation.

Second, because Canada is an invader-settler colony, any representation of Canada must either address or suppress or avoid or rewrite the fact of colonial invasion, conquest and settlement by Europeans into a land already inhabited by First Nations peoples. Given that canonical Canadian literature, like other national literatures, has been taken up critically as engaged in processes of reflecting Canada back to itself, or is otherwise interpreted as a means of defining or expressing or creating or producing the identity of Canada and of "Canadians" (which I mark this way to problematize the homogenizing nature of that term with all its unnamed exclusions and internal differences), then we can say that the concern with national origins, history and identity

has an inherent remembrance/pedagogy with regards to the traumatic history of colonization of First Nations land and peoples by Europeans.

Third, the production, reception and distribution of literature in tandem with the production, reception and distribution of the criticism of literature, through an interconnected network of institutions including the publishing industry, the media, academia and other schooling, is itself historical. It not only engages with history but becomes part of the history with which it is concerned or which it denies. In other words, colonialist representations of social worlds within Canadian literature which are interpreted and evaluated through modes of literary criticism become a significant part of the culture that has "nurtured the sentiment, rationale and imagination" (Said 1994, 12) of colonialism. Literary texts and critical reading practices can also produce counter-hegemonic narratives of history that disrupt the status quo cultural amnesia surrounding the traumatic history of colonization of First Nations peoples and land by Euro-Canadian governments and citizens.

My focal point in this project is reading the literary criticism on Canadian literary and political figure Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947). In reading Scott literary criticism, my central question asks what remembrance/pedagogies of the colonial history of First Nations-Canadian relations can be identified in Scott criticism. I am asking not what kinds of remembrances of history are embodied in Scott's poetry with regards to his attitudes toward Aboriginal peoples (though these are relevant to my project) but rather what kinds of learnings are instantiated about the colonial history of Canada in the remembrances of Scott. What do the readings of Scott's work remember and forget about

the broader historical context of colonial violence and domination? Through reading the readings of Scott as practices of remembrance implicated in public memory formation, I hope to illustrate some of the specific ways in which literary criticism functions as a technology of remembrance.

### iii) Duncan Campbell Scott The National Poet

Scott criticism makes a rich and complex subject to examine in terms of remembrance/pedagogies of colonial history because of Scott's location in two arenas of public life in Canada — the federal department of Indian Affairs, where he held the top position for nearly two decades (1913-1932), and the literary world of post-Confederation Canadian poetry. Scott was most well known as a poet and literary writer. He was canonized among a handful of poets who came to prominence in the 1890s, a group comprised of Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman and Scott. Along with his contemporaries, Scott's poetry has been read through discourses of cultural nationalism. For example, he was heralded as "the unofficial poet laureate of Canada" when he died in 1947 (Cullingham 1995), and was later called "one of the ancestral voices of the Canadian imagination" by Northrop Frye (Frye 1971, 245). The "poets of the nineties," as they were known, were later called the "poets of the confederation" by critic Malcom Ross (1960). According to Ross, he designated them poets of the confederation not because they were "avowed and self conscious prophets of the new Canadian nationalism" (Ross 1960, ix) of their day but because they "gave proof that we had a voice, that 'the child of nations, giant limb'd' [a line from a Charles G.D.

Roberts poem] was not a deaf mute after all" (Ibid, ix). Here we see the notion of the poet as a "voice of the nation." As a contemporary critic has noted, "nationalism has always been part of the cultural air that Canadian writers and critics have breathed. This desire to identify a distinctively Canadian literature has its origins in the widely prevalent assumption that every self-respecting nation ought to have its own linguistic and cultural identity" (MacLulich 1987,19).

Scott's poetry was seen to express and embody this identity. In a 1927 review of the collected *Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (published in 1926), Knister writes: "much of the work...might have been written anywhere in the English-speaking world, by a man cultured, urbane, of keen observation and delicate imagination. But there is enough that could have been conceived only in Canada by a son of Canada to give the work an indigenous value independent of the fact that on purely literary bases it ranks among the highest which has been produced here" (Knister 1927, 70). The national cultural significance attached to Scott's poetry is also articulated by G. Ross Roy (1961), who calls Scott "a true son of the New World" because "almost all of Scott's subjects find their roots in Canada; in this respect, he is, from a distance, the most nationalistic, the most Canadian of our great poets" (Roy 1961, 140).

As a "poet of the confederation" Scott was celebrated for the way in which he created images of Canada, not England or Europe. Figuratively "putting Canada on the map" of the national consciousness is understood within literary and other cultural discourses as crucial to the nation apprehending itself. A central part of the task "confronting poets of Scott's generation was to create a sense of mythology through

investing space with symbolic significance" (Mezei 1980, 24). For Scott's generation of poets, Canada was seen as a "young nation" (Mezei, 24) with "little time or history in terms of human events but aeons of time in the perspective of geological events" (24), hence in Scott's poem "Fragment of an Ode to Canada" he "discloses no past other than a geological one" (Mezei, 24).

> This is the land!
> It lies outstretched a vision of delight,
> Bent like a shield between the silver seas
> ...
> Land of the glacial, lonely mountain ranges,
> Where nothing haps save vast, Aeonian changes,
> The slow moraine, the avalanche's wings,
> Summer and Sun, -- the elemental things,
> Pulses of Awe, -- Winter and Night and the Lightnings.
> (*Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, 11)

In Mezei's interpretation of Scott's poem, she depicts Canada as having "scanty history" in terms of human events. In doing so, she engages the *terra incognita* conception of pre-colonial Canada as empty, therefore erasing the prior existence of First Nations peoples.

The markers of what is "distinctly Canadian" in literature, then, include the depiction of certain themes and the depiction of place. This is evident, for example, in the following comment: "In the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott there is more and finer expression of the pageantry of Nature in Canada and of the essential Canadian spirit than in the verse of any other Canadian poet" (Logan and French 1924, 43). The criticism signals an authorizing discourse outside of itself in which the "essential Canadian spirit" has already been articulated and where "pageantry of Nature" is a taken-for-granted literary value. Cultural nationalism is tied to the tradition of Romantic poetry which both

says something new and yet apparently says what is already known, what is already timeless.

The group of "poets of the confederation" are credited with having "established a national school of reflective nature poetry [that] achieved a standard of formal excellence unattained in Canada before and rarely equaled since" (A.J.M. Smith 1948, 104). Desmond Pacey (1948) notes that Scott's images of nature stood out from his contemporaries because while other writers in Scott's day "characteristically paint Nature in her moments of calm...Scott gives us pictures of Nature in storm" (Pacey, 98). Pacey cites "Rapids at Night," a poem which was written following one of Scott's numerous northern expeditions through First Nations communities in his work for the department of Indian Affairs. From "The Rapids At Night:"

> Here at the root of the mountains,
> Between the sombre legions of cedars and tamaracks,
> The rapids charge the ravine;
> A little light, cast by foam under starlight,
> Wavers about the shimmering stems of birches:
> Here rise up the clangorous sounds of battle,
> Immense and mournful,
> Far above curves the great dome of darkness
> Drawn with the limitless lines of the stars and the planets.
> Deep at the core of the tumult,
> Deeper than all the voices that cry at the surface,
> Dwells one fathomless sound,
> Under the hiss and cry, the stroke and the plangent clamour.
> (*The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, 19).

In response to Scott's northern wilderness poems, Daniells (1965) credits Scott for his "revelation of Canada's wildness and beauty, of peacefulness or rushing fury in nature as counterparts to our own feelings" (Roy Daniells 1965, 421). E.K. Brown (1951)

discusses another of the northern poems, "The Height of Land,"[5] describing it as "the nearest equivalent in verse of the evocation of the northern country in the work of so many of our painters" (Brown 1951, 26). Brown suggests that the northern landscape was Scott's "imaginative centre" (Ibid, 26). In "The Height of Land" Scott pictures

> The lonely north enlaced with lakes and streams,
> And the enormous targe of Hudson Bay
> Glimmering all night
> In the cold arctic light.
> (*The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, 47).

Contemporary critic, Stan Dragland has termed Scott "the first true poet of the North" and cites "The Height of Land" as especially important in this regard (in Cullingham, 1995).

While Scott's poetic evocations of nature were not limited to the northern wilderness, these have been seen as his most distinct and characteristic. The northern landscape is strongly associated in literary criticism (and in other cultural discourses of Canada) with the presence of Aboriginal peoples and culture. As Roy Daniells puts it in his chapter on Scott in *Literary History of Canada* (1965), "All the poems for which [Scott] is likely to be remembered are concerned with the northern wilderness, Canada's Indian territory" (Daniells, 419).

Daniells' view is borne out in Scott criticism to the extent that Scott's most recognizable work and generally thought to be his best (Geddes 1914, 34; Daniells 1965,

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"Height of Land" was written in 1915, but Brown reports "was an outcome of the great northern journeys of 1905 and 1906" on the Treaty 9 expeditions in which Scott played a key role (Brown 1951, 26).

419; Dragland 1992, 11 ) are his so-called "Indian poems." Though written over the span of Scott's writing career, taken together, the "Indian poems" comprise a small but critically acclaimed collection of poetry that depicts Aboriginal characters in northern settings. The poems are written from what the majority of literary critics have deemed to be a "sensitive," "humane" and "compassionate" point of view. As Monkman puts it in his survey of *Images of the Indian in English Canadian Literature*: "The white writer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who is most closely identified with the culture of the Indian is Duncan Campbell Scott" (Monkman 1981, 70).

Scott's depictions of Aboriginal people in his poetry often turn on the "distinction between Indian cultures of the past and present" (Monkman, 71) in an era where the ideology of "the vanishing Indian race" was prevalent. One of Scott's first published poems appeared in a Canadian literature anthology titled *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889). In the introduction to the collection, editor William Lighthall reflects "a preoccupation of most of his literary contemporaries and predecessors when he speaks of 'the lament of vanishing races singing their death-song as they are swept on to the cataract of oblivion" (qtd. in Monkman, 65). Lighthall's comment is an example of the narrations of Canadian history that circulate within literary criticism.

One of Scott's most famous and most quoted "Indian poems" (Patterson 1967, 70) is "The Onondaga Madonna," originally published in 1898. The poem addresses the "vanishing race" through its image of the "paler" child held in the mother's arms, who signals "the promise of her nation's doom."

She stands full throated and with careless pose,

This woman of a weird and waning race,
The tragic savage lurking in her face,
Where all her pagan passion burns and glows;
Her blood is mingled with her ancient foes,
And thrills with war and wildness in her veins;
...
And closer in the shawl about her breast,
The latest promise of her nation's doom,
Paler than she her baby clings and lies,
The primal warrior gleaming from his eyes;
...
(*The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, 230).

Scott has been recognized by critics as a significant poetic voice in Canada. While Scott was evaluated as one of the important poets during his lifetime (Logan & French 1924, Knister 1927), as several critics have discussed, within the group of his peers, Scott was the least acclaimed (Brown 1943, 75; Daniels 1965, 416; Roy 1961, 140) and received "delayed recognition of his achievements" (Daniells, 416).[6] By later literary critics he has been positioned within the canon not in terms of the consistent quality or substantial quantity of his work (Dragland 1974, 3; Frye 1971, 9), but in terms of his themes and perspective and their place in cultural nationalist discourses.

Scott's location in the canon of Canadian literature has been constant, yet marginal. The shadow of being forgotten as "minor" or especially less than "minor" (since the minors have their place), falls over the memory of Scott at various points in

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A.J.M. Smith posits that some of the reasons "for the comparative neglect of Scott's poetry are no doubt to be found in...the classical virtues of restraint and precision" that he suggests Scott consciously adopted, along with "the courtly and now somewhat old-fashioned virtues of the cultivated gentleman, carried over into the realm of sensibility and art" (Smith 1948, 105).

history and keeps remembrance a necessary act of reaffirmation. Scott criticism has often been engaged in a process of reappraisal and repositioning Scott's work more securely within canonical terms (Brown 1943, Smith 1948, Matthews 1980, Stich 1980). The critical reappraisals of Scott's work underlines one element of remembrance/pedagogy within literary criticism with regards to how it instantiates implicit and explicit assumptions about who is to be remembered, how, and for what reasons. In contrast to someone like Scott, we do not generally speak of "remembering Shakespeare." His position in the canon is so secure that he is thought to exist in the timeless, universal present. This is not the case with Scott. Thus the language of remembrance is appropriate to Scott in traditional literary terms because of the fact that his position in the canon has been vulnerable and there has, in effect, been a project to remember Scott tied up with nationalist literature.

But I am positing that the language of remembrance adds something more to a discussion of Scott's work than recognition. With the emergence, especially in the past decade and a half, of a more critical view of First Nations-Canadian relations historically and in the present, literary criticism has begun to turn in reading Scott's "Indian poems" toward the question of how to understand Scott's literary output in relation to Canadian policy on the First Nations. In earlier decades literary critics such as E.K. Brown (1943, 1951), Pelham Edgar (1952) and A.J.M. Smith (1948, 1959) touched only briefly on Scott's work in the Department of Indian Affairs and did so with an approving nod to the colonial relationship between the Canadian state and Aboriginal peoples. More recently, the balance of attention to Scott has been shifting toward his government work and his

historical role as an agent of colonial oppression. This change is evident in the Cullingham (1995) documentary video titled *Duncan Campbell Scott: the Poet and the Indians*, in literary critic Stan Dragland's 1992 study *Floating Voice: Duncan Campbell Scott and The Literature of Treaty 9*, and articles by Lisa Salem-Wiseman (1993, 1996). As an example of the impact of historical narrations on literary criticism, the shift in attention is significant.

In the main, though, the scholars who have written or spoken (in a documentary film, Cullingham 1995) about Scott from a counter-hegemonic or anti-colonialist perspective are not literary critics, but historians (Patterson 1967, Titely 1986, Wright 1992 and Stevenson, 1995). This is not to suggest that historians necessarily work from a perspective that takes seriously the voices, experience, analysis and scholarship of First Nations peoples on the history of their colonization by the Canadian state. But in the case of Scott criticism, it is historians who have opened up a more complex dialogue that speaks to the fact of Scott as an agent of state violence in administering Indian Affairs policies and therefore helps to recontextualize Scott's "Indian poems" as forms of remembrance.

Historian E. Brian Titely's 1986 detailed study of Scott's role in the administration of Indian Affairs in Canada, suggestively titled *A Narrow Vision*, is important in this regard. His book touches on Scott's literary career but focuses on Indian Affairs, framed within a perspective that is critical of the paternalistic and exploitative relation of the Canadian state to Aboriginal peoples and their land. Prior to Titely's exhaustive research, historian E. Palmer Patterson's (1967) more superficial article

examined Scott's poetry, specifically his "Indian poems" with the intention of discerning in them "clues to the attitudes toward Indians which influenced [Scott] as he carried out his duties as Indian administrator" (Patterson, 69). Patterson looks at six of the poems ("The Onondaga Madonna," "Watkwenies," "The Half-breed Girl," "The Forsaken," "At Gull Lake: August, 1810," and "Powassan's Drum," 70-72) and finds that "the character of the Indian portrayed by Scott is a combination of stealth, wild passion, absence of compassion, and superstition" (72). Patterson argues that, in Scott's "Indian poems," "culturally and biologically the Indian is presented as being forced to submit to the inevitability of progress" (Patterson, 73). Thus we can read Patterson as engaging a critical reading of what he determines is the remembrance/pedagogy of the history of First Nations-Canadian relations represented in Scott's poetry. Patterson asserts that "nineteenth century notions of Social Darwinism and the survival of the fittest, and the high confidence in Western Civilization's achievement and its future" (upper case in original) are the underlying assumptions of the poetry" (73). In this sense, he finds that the assumptions underlying both the poetry and the government policy are the same.

Patterson's article is important as an initial attempt to consider the relationship between Scott's literary representations of Aboriginal characters and his political representation of them in the department of Indian Affairs which was supposed to represent and "protect" the interests of Aboriginal peoples. It is significant in terms of the remembrance/pedagogy of colonialism in literary criticism that Patterson's article did not

make an impact on two later collections of Scott criticism.[7] Within these two collections, only John Flood's article "Native People in Scott's Short Fiction" (Flood 1980) stands out as critical of the images of Aboriginal characters Scott creates and as somewhat critical toward the underlying tenets of colonization.[8]

To speak of the remembrances of Duncan Campbell Scott and engage the question — the asking after — of the memory of colonialism in literary criticism that itself remembers Scott's work, foregrounds remembrance as an issue for criticism and literary studies in a Canadian context.

### iv) Duncan Campbell Scott and Indian Affairs

The public identification of Scott with "the culture of the Indian," as Monkman puts it, also encompassed another career. During most of his literary career, Scott was an administrator in the department of Indian Affairs, where he rose steadily to the top rank of

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One was the 1974 collection *Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism* (Dragland, 1974) that gathered Scott criticism previously published from 1924 to 1972. Dragland mentions Patterson in passing but dismisses his view of Scott as "little short of a social Darwinist" (Dragland 1974, 179). The other collection of Scott criticism that did not take up Patterson's article was the 1980 proceedings from a Duncan Campbell Scott symposium at the University of Ottawa which was organized under the theme of a reappraisal of Scott's work in Canadian literature (Stich ed. 1980).

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Leslie Monkman's (1981) thematic survey of the "recurring images and attitudes in English-Canadian literary history," Thomas King, Cheryl Calver and Helen Hoy's collection *The Native in Literature: Canadian and Contemporary Perspectives* (1987), and Terry Goldie's (1989) semiotic study of images of the Native in Canadian literature are important as a source of critique of non-Aboriginal representations of Aboriginal people and culture in Canadian literature. Scott's work is addressed only briefly in these works, however.

deputy superintendent general and remained in that position for nearly twenty years (1913-1932). He was a powerful bureaucrat who oversaw the implementation of oppressive federal policies of assimilation and "civilization" as spelled out in the all-encompassing Indian Act. Based on analyzes of Scott's government writings, published historical articles, government correspondence and personal correspondence with literary colleagues, Scott did not question or contradict the colonialist mentality of the policies he actively sought to implement (Titely 1986, Patterson 1967, Stevenson 1995). In this section, I will present a synopsis of Scott's work for the department of Indian Affairs. This overview provides an important contrast to what is most common in the remembrances of history found in Scott's literary criticism.

The formal policy of the Canadian government enshrined in the first Indian Act of 1876 rendered Aboriginal people children in the eyes of the law, unable to conduct their own affairs or hold legal status as citizens and thus in need of protection from the paternalistic government. Along with this idea of protection, however, were policies aimed at the destruction of Aboriginal culture and of Aboriginal people *as* distinct, as Aboriginal. This led to convoluted explanations of government policy. For example in 1924 Scott wrote

> The policy of the Dominion has always been to protect Indians, to guard their identity as a race and at the same time to apply methods which will destroy that identity and lead eventually to their disappearance as a separate division of the population (Scott, qtd. in Valverde 1991, 115).

This two-pronged and contradictory policy of protection and destruction of Aboriginal cultures as distinct relates to yet another contradiction in the history of Aboriginal-

Canadian relations. As Daniel Francis (1992) puts it, "at the heart of the government policy lay a paradox. The stated aim of the policy was to assimilate Indians to the mainstream of Canadian society; but the means chosen to implement this policy was segregation" (Francis 1992, 216). Chamberlin (1975) elaborates the issue.

> There are those who have questioned the sanity of a piece of legislation [The Indian Act] which actively discouraged and indeed in some areas positively prohibited, the assimilation of the Indian into the social and economic life of the non-native populations, while at the same time being the centrepiece of a broad policy of moving the Indians toward full citizenship and full participation in Canadian life (Chamberlin 1975, 90, qtd. in Dragland 1992, 110).

Nine years after his retirement from the Department of Indian Affairs, Scott described himself in deceptively neutral terms in a letter in response to influential critic and friend E.K. Brown:

> Your remarks about the Indian poems are very good. I had for about twenty years the oversight of their development and I was never unsympathetic to aboriginal ideals, but there was the law which I did not originate and which I never tried to amend in the direction of severity. One can hardly be sympathetic with the contemporary Sun-dance or Potlatch when one knows that the original spirit has departed and that they are largely the opportunities for debauchery by low white men (Scott, qtd. in McDougall 1983, 26).

Scott's claims about himself can be measured against the detailed account provided by Titely's exhaustive study of the active role Scott played as deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs. Titely calls Scott "the principal architect of Indian policy" during this period. Titely cites literary critic Roy Daniells who claimed that Scott's "concern with Indians as wards of the Canadian government was sincere and deep; within the somewhat

narrow limits set by government policy he laboured unceasingly for them" (Daniells 1965, 435.) Titely claims that such an assumption overlooks the critical role that Scott actually played in directing government policy" (Titely 1989, 31).

Scott was active during what the RCAP report identifies as the "displacement and assimilation" stage of First Nations-Canadian relations, a stage lasting roughly from 1812 to 1969. During this long and highly destructive period "interventions in Aboriginal societies reached their peak taking the form of [forced] relocations, residential schools, the outlawing of Aboriginal cultural practices and various other interventionist measures of the type found in the Indian Acts of the late 1800s and early 1900s (RCAP Report 1996, Vol. 1, 38). Scott played a role in several forms of intervention during his career in the department of Indian Affairs. Among these interventions was the suppression of the 1924 Mohawk political mobilization for sovereignty recognition on the Six Nations reserve near Brantford, Ontario led by Deskaheh. The suppression included the physical ousting of the traditional council from the longhouse at Oshwegan, Ontario by police and the forced introduction of a band council system (Wright 1992, 324). Other interventions in which Scott played an active role include the outlawing of Aboriginal dance along with the spiritual and cultural ceremonies within which such dancing took place such as the Potlatch and the Sundance, the increased enforcement of attendance at residential schools for Aboriginal children, the maintenance of residential schools in such an impoverished state that epidemics of tuberculosis killed thousands of children, and the involuntary enfranchisement of Aboriginal people without their knowledge which meant a loss of their Indian status within the definitions of the Indian Act and a weakening of the reserve

land base (Titely 1986).

Scott claimed in his comment to E.K. Brown, which I cited earlier, that he never tried to amend the law in the direction of severity. An examination of amendments to the Indian Act that he proposed suggests otherwise. In 1924 Scott proposed an amendment to the Indian Act that would prevent lawyers and "agitators" from collecting money from Indians for the pursuit of claims against the government without department approval (Titely, 59). In other words, First Nations communities were forbidden to hire lawyers to act on their behalf unless the department of Indian Affairs approved of the decision. This proposal was incorporated into the Indian Act as Section 149a in 1927. Later it became Section 141 (Titely, 59). When the amendment was introduced in the House of Commons the reason given was that it would be to "the advantage of the Indians that these contracts be scrutinized by the department in order to protect them from exploitation" (qtd. in Titely, 59). However, the real concern was political mobilization on issues such as land and sovereignty claims by Aboriginal organizations who were employing the services of legal counsel.

In 1918 Scott introduced an amendment to the Indian Act to "enfranchise individual Indians or a band of Indians without the necessity of obtaining their consent thereto in cases where it was found upon investigation that the continuance of wardship was no longer in the interests of the public or the Indians" (amendment qtd. in Titely, 48). This became law in 1920. Historian Ronald Wright describes the policy of "enfranchisement"in this way: "Indians were expected to give up membership in their own nations forever in exchange for the privilege of voting in Canadian elections. Males

received a lump sum and a piece of land — essentially a bribe — snipped from their reserve. Few took the bait" (Wright 1992, 316). In meetings held before the bill was passed, thirty-five Aboriginal witnesses, including legal counsel for the Six Nations and for the Allied Tribes of British Columbia, spoke against it, expressing the fear that the bill would destroy their communities and demanding the continuation of consultation (Titely, 49). A statement by the Allied Tribes of British Columbia "claimed that the bill would break up the tribes, destroy Indian status and undermine native land claims" (Titely 50). The Allied Tribes asked why Indians could not obtain the vote and citizenship while retaining their lands and status (Titely, 50). It was in relation to this bill that Scott made what has become an often-quoted statement:

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point. Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department and that is the whole object of this Bill (qtd. in Titely, 50).

In the area of education, Scott also played an active role. He was made superintendent of education in 1909, before becoming the deputy superintendent general in 1913, and he influenced an increase in power of the department over Aboriginal parents and their children. In 1930 the Indian Act was amended to "strengthen and expand the department's power to enforce school attendance" (Titely, 92). The highly destructive impact of residential schools on First Nations communities has now been made public knowledge. The schools brought about cultural destruction through loss of languages and cultural inheritance, as well as family and community breakdown through

enforced lack of parenting. Physical and sexual abuse was rampant. The legacy of the residential schools continues (Stevenson 1995).

The much-lauded "self sufficiency" for First Nations peoples that the government policy of assimilation emphasized did not include political self sufficiency but was to be on terms totally dictated by government. When First Nations leaders emerged who challenged the policies of the department of Indian Affairs, Scott worked to undermine individual leaders and overthrow collective efforts. For example, Scott was very active in an organized effort to discredit and undermine Mohawk organizer, F.O. Loft. This effort involved a network of informers and spies including Indian agents, provincial police, the RCMP, missionaries and some Aboriginal informers (Titely 104-06). F.O. Loft of the Upper Mohawk band on Six Nations reserve returned as a veteran from the first world war and became the charismatic president of the newly formed League of Indians of Canada which aimed to unite all Aboriginal communities across the country for political actions on shared grievances including "alienation of reserve lands, restrictions on traditional hunting and fishing rights, the suppression of Aboriginal customs, the debilitating effects of boarding school education, the inadequacy of health services, lack of economic opportunities and the paternalistic overlordship of the Indian Affairs" (Titely, 101). To Scott's embarrassment and irritation, Loft and the League received some favourable coverage in the press, including an article that quoted him saying "if anything is responsible for the backwardness of the Indians today, it is the domineering, dictating, vetoing method of the Indian Department. The position and treatment of the Indian today is as if he were an imbecile" (F.O. Loft qtd. in Titely, 107).

In *Stolen Continents: The Americas Through Indian Eyes Since 1492,* historian Ronald Wright writes: "against all Indian leaders at odds with the settler government stood Duncan Campbell Scott, head of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932. Scott was a time-serving mandarin but eager man of letters. He took a romantic interest in native tradition, but living natives were another matter" (Wright 1992, 321).

In 1905 Scott was appointed as one of the Dominion of Canada's representatives on the treaty commission for the signing of the James Bay Treaty or Treaty 9. As one of three commissioners, Scott traveled by canoe through northern Ontario during the summers of 1905 and 1906. These trips led to a burst of literary output for Scott and influenced his poetry for many years afterward. He continued to write poems with Aboriginal characters and themes set in the north well into the 1930s (Edgar 1952, 60).

Treaty 9 opened up northern Ontario as a passage to the west and for economic exploitation by mining, forestry and hydro-electric power. At the turn of the twentieth century, a number of technological changes made the land in northern Ontario both more valuable to the government and more accessible. The technology to create hydroelectric power which became a vital factor in the growth of the pulp and paper industry, the building of a northern railway line, and the discovery of silver, gold, copper and other minerals during the construction of the railway radically changed the view of the northern regions held by government and industry. "The invasion of northern Ontario by miners, lumbermen, construction workers and settlers was thus assured" (Titely 62). The lands of the Hudson and James Bay basin were Cree and Ojibwa lands and Aboriginal title had never been extinguished. "It became evident to officials in Ottawa that the development

of the area would be best effected by dealing with the question of [A]boriginal title as soon as possible" (Titely 63).

In 1899 Scott and another government inspector visited the Robinson Treaty Indians at Brunswick House in northern Ontario. While there, they came into contact with Cree and Ojibwa whose lands lay north of those ceded in the Robinson Treaty of 1850. "These non-treaty Indians expressed concern at the erosion of their rights as miners and surveyors invaded their territories in increasing numbers and disrupted their hunting activities. Rumours regarding the construction of railways in the area were causing particular alarm...Other petitions from First Nations communities arrived in Ottawa alarmed at encroachments" (Titely 62-3). Mining and lumber companies also sought assurances from the government that their ventures would not be compromised by the technicality of [A]boriginal title (Titely 62-63).

Government agents estimated that there were a maximum of 3000 (based on a count of 2140) Aboriginal people living in the territories to be covered by Treaty 9. Scott, chief accountant for the department of Indian Affairs at the time, estimated cost of negotiating the treaty of $15,000, plus an initial treaty payment of eight dollars per person totaling approximately $24,000. Therefore, for less than $40,000, the government would purchase a huge tract of land "nearly twice as large as the State of New York" (Scott 1947, 111). Scott himself noted that "this territory contains as much arable land, many millions of feet of pulpwood, untold wealth of minerals, and unharnessed water-powers sufficient to do the work of half the continent" (Scott 1947, 111). After the initial payment of eight dollars per person, the yearly annuities were set at four dollars per

person. Negotiations of the terms of the treaty took place between federal and provincial governments. Between them they decided that reserves amounting to one square mile for every family of five, carefully selected to exclude lands of potential value to non-Aboriginal interests, would be offered in return for the ceding of proprietary rights to an area of approximately 90,000 square miles. If we take the estimated number of Cree and Ojibwa people living in the territories at 2140, the one square mile per family of five calculation equals reserve areas totaling a mere 428 square miles. Furthermore, a clause in the treaty stipulated that

> such portions of the reserves and lands above indicated as may at any time be required for public works, buildings, railways, or roads of whatsoever nature may be appropriated for that purpose by His Majesty's government of the Dominion of Canada, due compensation being made to the Indians (qtd. in Titely, 66).

According to Titely, the primary concern of the Aboriginal people of the James Bay basin in ceding title was that they be permitted to continue their hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the territories surrendered. The treaty stated

> And His Majesty the King thereby agrees with said Indians that they have the right to pursue their usual vocation of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered as heretofore described, subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the government of the country, acting under the authority of His Majesty and saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or such purposes (Treaty 9, qtd. in Titely, 66).

There was a tremendous disparity between what was offered to the First Nations involved and the potential wealth that would be generated for non-Aboriginals from the land. The silver mines at Cobalt produced in excess of $206,000,000 of the metal during their first

eighteen years of operation alone. The gold-mining operations at Dome, Porcupine and Kirkland Lake also produced great wealth. The mining activity created the predicted demand for power and "hydro companies obliged with dams on the Mattagami and Abitibi waterways" (Titely 73). Pulp and paper industry growth was also realized. The Abitibi Pulp and Paper Company plant at Iroquois Falls was the world's largest by the end of the 1920s. (Titely 73).

### v) Placing the Trauma of History Before Literature

I withhold my own suggestions for different terms on which Scott can be remembered until the final chapter of this paper. However, there is a way in which the framework I have developed in this chapter suggests that historians such as Titely and Patterson provide in part a more ethical method of remembering Scott, which requires us to read history counter-hegemonically and then re-read literature. I am positing, therefore, that counter-hegemonic narrations of history need to come "before" literature. More specifically, I suggest that the fact of colonialist trauma in Canada needs to come before literature. I say the "fact of trauma" to foreground one of the basic dynamics of the colonial process; that it was/is a very violent process and has created a massive degree of trauma for First Nations communities, as speakers and writers from those communities have amply testified (see for example LaPrairie 1987, Silman 1987, Chrystos 1988, Brant 1989, Sugar & Fox 1989, Monture 1989, Richardson 1989, Maracle 1990, Perreault & Vance 1990, Wright 1992, Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart 1997).

I suggest that counter-hegemonic understandings of history need to come "before" literature in two senses. One is in the sense that the history of European invasion and conquest of First Nations land and peoples in Canada began before the creation of Canadian literature. In other words, the events of this history began before representations of it were produced in Canadian literature and interpreted by Canadian literary criticism. This is not to overlook the ways in which narrative discourses that supported colonialist expansion already circulated in both historical and literary texts. My point, however, is that the reception and institutionalization specifically of Canadian literature within (and

through the mechanisms of) criticism has subsequently been implicated in a relationship to the cultural and material processes of colonial domination. The other sense in which history must come before literature is in the sense of a question and a relationship being posed to criticism — put before criticism as a call. In this latter sense, readings of Canadian literature which address history or identity or origins in Canada cannot ethically "forget" that colonialist history is present; the fact(s) of trauma rooted in people's experience of historical processes, presents themselves for response and responsibility. The traumatic history of colonialism haunts the present and how it will be represented in literary criticism is a question that must be put to — put before — criticism. Remembering the fact of trauma of invasion, conquest and coercive tutelage can create a radically different "structure of attitude and reference toward imperialism" in literary criticism.

### vi) Evaluative Discourses in Scott Literary Criticism

It is the issue of the relationship between Scott's Indian Affairs work and his literary output as this relationship is addressed in literary criticism that makes Scott such a complex and interesting figure to examine in terms of questions of remembrance/ pedagogies of First Nations-Canadian relations. How various texts of literary criticism address the relationship between Scott's poetic depictions of Aboriginal characters and his influential role as an agent of state policies of colonialist assimilation provides a touchstone for my reading of the readings of Scott's work. Scott criticism is a significant example of literary criticism as a technology of remembrance that articulates a structure

of attitude and reference toward the history of the colonial project in Canada and its impact on the present.

I have identified three evaluative discourses that structure remembrances of colonization in Canada through their framing of remembrances of Scott and his poetry in literary criticism. As I will elaborate in the following three chapters, the three discourses engage in remembrance/pedagogies that instantiate various learnings toward Euro-Canadian domination of First Nations peoples and land through the historical relations of imperial conquest and colonial settlement. The first evaluative discourse is concerned with the authenticity of what we can call an ethnographic knowledge of the other in Scott's poems. I have termed this discourse "the ring of absolute truth," after a phrase used by one of Scott's critics (Edgar 1952, 68). The second evaluative discourse reads Scott's poems through notions of "universal themes of human nature" operating through "universal symbols of man." The third evaluative practice arises from a conception of a division and, by extension, a conflict, between "pure poetry" or the autonomy of the literary text and "contaminated" politics. In this project, I present and critique specific examples of each of these evaluative discourses in Scott literary criticism. Individual critics whose work I discuss overlap in their use of more than one evaluative discourse. I am reading the discourses from a perspective of what they erase. I problematize criticism that engages a remembrance/pedagogy of colonial domination as either justifiable, necessary, nostalgic, or forgettable. Part of the historical erasure in literary criticism is a view of colonial conquest as an inevitable step along the path of progress with some unfortunate consequences that were nevertheless unavoidable and mostly attributable to

the "problem of the Indian" in adapting to more advanced European culture. In the final chapter I suggest two additional evaluative discourses through which to read Scott's work. One foregrounds "imperialist nostalgia" and the other Scott as settler subject.

In looking at the evaluative discourses of authentic knowledge of the other, universal symbols of man, and "pure poetry" versus "contaminated politics" I will consider how each relates to concerns of historicization and aestheticization of Scott's poetry by his critics. Literary critics at times read Scott's work in ways that foreground a historicization of his Indian Affairs career, government policies, and "the Indian question." At other times, critics foreground aesthetic considerations of form and literary technique in ways that in a sense de-historicize Scott's "Indian poems." In either case, however, particular remembrance/pedagogies of First Nations-Canadian relations are produced and circulated. The evaluative discourses I have identified are components of literary criticism as a technology of remembrance.

## Chapter 2

### "The Ring of Absolute Truth"

As I have stated, in reading Scott literary criticism, my central question asks what remembrance-pedagogies of the First Nations-Canadian relations can be identified in Scott criticism. In other words, what kinds of learnings are instantiated about the violent colonial history of Canada in and through the remembrances of Scott. What do the readings of Scott's work remember and forget about the broader historical context of colonial conquest and domination? By reading the readings of Scott as practices of remembrance implicated in public memory formation, some of the specific ways in which literary criticism functions as a technology of remembrance will be illustrated.

How various texts of literary criticism address the relationship between Scott's poetic representations of individual Aboriginal characters and his influential role in the department of Indian Affairs provides a touchstone for my exploration of the remembrance-pedagogies of First Nations-Canadian relations that circulate in the criticism. The first of three evaluative discourses I will discuss draws an explicit relationship between Scott's poetry and his Indian Affairs position. This evaluative discourse assesses the quality of Scott's "Indian poems" in terms of the authenticity accorded to Scott's images of Aboriginal people and cultures. This discourse is fundamentally concerned with knowledge as a form of cultural and political authority and as a possession which enables and legitimizes such authority. It centers on the role of Scott's "first-hand experience" with Aboriginal peoples "in the field" — that is in non-

urban, northern settings — as the source of what we could term an ethnographic knowledge of the Native Other. In this sense, the discourse is linked to an anthropological practice of ethnography or knowledge of other cultures, but it informs the assessments made in literary criticism. Measuring how well Scott was able to represent "the Indian as he really was" (Smith 1948, 110), this evaluative discourse uses a barometer of "realism" or "truth" as an instrument to determine critical excellence. A number of critics that span the period 1914 to 1992 have read Scott's "Indian poems" as knowledgeable and accurate depictions of Aboriginal life. In this chapter I will present a range of critical views that employ the evaluative discourse of authentic knowledge and include samples of poems on which the assessments are based.

Scott's capacity to create authentic images is seen to result from his first-hand experiences with Aboriginal people in the northern wilderness of Canada, and across the country. Scott's work for Indian Affairs is widely recognized as one of the most formative influences on his poetry. Critic E.K. Brown traces the story of Scott and his travel for Indian Affairs. Brown notes that after Scott became secretary to the department of Indian Affairs in 1896, he began to travel more among First Nations communities, on "journeys of inspection into the wilder parts of the country which were to have so large a part in his best poetry" (Brown 1951, 20). In Scott's 1898 book of poetry *Labour and the Angel* his "impressions of the Indians began to appear" (Ibid). The two trips most influential to his writing were the 1905 and 1906 Treaty 9 expeditions through northern Ontario which I have already discussed. Following the first of these trips, in Scott's 1905 collection *New World Lyrics and Ballads*, "the Indian poems and the poems about the wilderness are for

the first time dominant" (Ibid, 22). Scott continued to write "Indian poems" long after his two major northern expeditions of 1905 and 1906. As late as 1933, at the age of 71, Scott wrote "A Scene at Lake Manitou." Another acclaimed poem, "At Gull Lake: August, 1810" was written the following year, in 1934.

In a 1927 review of *Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott,* Raymond Knister calls attention to the "poems about Indians and their life" and notes that they "are based upon long knowledge and observation" (Knister 1927, 69).[9] Knister quotes from "The Half-Breed Girl," originally published in 1906 following the second of Scott's northern Ontario treaty-signing expeditions among the Cree and Ojibwa. For Knister, "The Half-Breed Girl" depicts "mingled ancestral pulses" (Knister 1948, 69). He quotes the final three verses of the poem.

> Her heart is shaken with longing
> For the strange still years,
> For what she knows and knows not,
> For the wells of ancient tears.
>
> A voice calls from the rapids,
> Deep, careless and free,
> A voice that is larger than her life
> Or than her death will be.
>
> She covers her face with her blanket,
> Her fierce soul hates her breath,
> As it cries with a sudden passion
> For life or death.
> (*Poems of DCS*, 55)

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As a critic, Raymond Knister was a contemporary of Smith's and was described by Scott as "a protagonist of the Modern movement in poetry" whom Scott found nevertheless "most hospitable to the old poets." Knister dedicated his 1928 edited collection *Canadian Short Stories* to DC Scott (see Dragland 1974, 65).

Poet and influential critic, A.J.M. Smith[10] also connects what he views as Scott's imaginative capacity to present "the Indian as he really is" (A.J.M. Smith 1948, 110) to the contact Scott had with Aboriginal people. Smith is one of the many critics who thinks Scott reached the height of his poetic abilities in his "Indian poems." Smith writes:

> The most original of Duncan Campbell Scott's poems are those in which there is a union of these two qualities, emotional intensity and perfection of form; and these, as might have been expected, are the lyrics and ballads of Indian life. ..His experiences in this post [as deputy superintendent general] — his duties sometimes took him on arduous canoe trips into the Indian country south of Hudson Bay — gave him a knowledge of the Indian and his feelings that make his interpretations of the red man unique in our literature (Smith 1948, 110).

In the following passage Smith elaborates on Scott's knowledge of Aboriginal life.

> [Scott's] imagination in the first instance caught and communicated the feel of the vast northern land and peopled it with the survivors of its aboriginal inhabitants... Poetic imagination brought as a kind of insight to dwell upon the Indian as he really is gives unique significance to early successes like "The Half Breed Girl" and "The Forsaken."..."At Gull Lake: August, 1810" [and] "A Scene at Lake Manitou" stand alone among Canadian poems for their union of anthropological interest and intensely dramatic power...[they are] remarkable for the objectivity with which they are presented and the cumulative power with which they are developed (Smith 1948, 110).

Smith examines "At Gull Lake: August, 1810." He tells us that the poem "takes us back more than a hundred years to a scene of passion and cruelty. It is painted in sharp, raw

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AJM Smith was himself a canonical Canadian poet and critic. The article from which I am quoting was written the year after Scott's death and functions in part as a memoir; it is for Scott, Smith tell us, "whose memory I will to honour by examining his poetry and criticism" (Smith 1948, 105).

colors; the action is quick and fierce" (Smith, 112):

> The two camps were pitched on the shore
> The clustered teepees
> Of Tabashaw Chief of the Saulteaux.
> And on a knoll tufted with poplars
> The gray tents of a trader —
> Nairne of the Orkneys.
> Before his tents under the shade of the poplars
> Sat Keejigo, third of the wives
> Of Tabashaw Chief of the Saulteaux;
> Clad in the skins of antelopes
> Broidered with porcupine quills
> Coloured with vivid dyes.
> Vermillion here and there
> In the roots of her hair...
> Keejigo daughter of Launay
> The Normandy hunter
> And Oshawan of the Saulteaux.
> (*Poets of the Confederation*, 119)

Keejigo is in love with the Scottish trader and "offered her body and spirit/ With abject unreasoning passion/ As Earth abandons herself/ To the sun and the thrust of the lightning" (Scott, 120). Smith writes that Keejigo's love for Nairne of the Orkneys is "etched in vivid strokes" and then "given its intensest expression in a lyric that suggests perfectly the quality of primitive Indian poetry" (Smith, 111). He then quotes from the poem three verses of Keejigo's voice as it is presented in the poem:

> The flower lives on the prairies,
> The wind in the sky,
> I am here for my beloved;
> The wind and the flower.
>
> The crane hides in the sand-hills,
> Where does the wolverine hide?
> I am here my beloved,
> Heart's blood on the feathers

The foot caught in the trap.

Take the flower in your hand,
The wind in your nostrils;
I am here my beloved;
Release the captive,
Heal the wound under the feathers.
(*Poets of the Confederation*, 120).

Keejigo is rejected by the Scottish trader and then attacked by her own Saulteaux family.

A storm cloud was marching
Vast on the prairie...
Twice Nairne had turned her away
Afraid of the venom of Tabashaw,
Twice had the Chief fired at his tents
And now when two bullets
Whistled above his encampment
He yelled, "Drive this bitch to her master."

Keejigo went down a path by the lake...

At the top of the bank
The old wives caught her and cast her down
Where Tabashaw crouched by his camp-fire.

He snatched a live brand from the embers,
Seared her cheeks,
Blinded her eyes,
Destroyed her beauty with fire,
Screaming, "Take that face to your lover."
Keejigo held her face to the fury
And made no sound.
The old wives dragged her away
And threw her over the bank
Like a dead dog.
Then burst the storm.

(*Poets of the Confederation*, 121).

Pelham Edgar (1952) suggests that the "qualities in Scott's poetry which posterity will cherish" are to be found in Scott's "native narrative pieces" where, because "Scott...was a first hand observer...the numerous poems he devoted to the themes [of Aboriginal life] have the ring of absolute truth" (Edgar 1952, 68). Edgar was one of Scott's most active and influential critics. Edgar held a powerful institutional position in academia. He was an English professor and head of the English Department of Victoria College at the University of Toronto. Edgar was a strong advocate for the inclusion of Scott in the Canadian literary canon and wrote numerous review articles on Scott's work[11] Edgar and Scott were also close friends for over 50 years and colleagues who co-edited a series of Canadian history books called *Makers of Canada.*

In his 1952 diary-essay titled "Travelling with a Poet," Edgar describes travelling with Scott in the official role of secretary on the 1906 Treaty 9 expedition. He historicizes Scott's poems in a number of ways. The essay employs several discourses in its collage of genres; part trip diary, part historical account of Canadian Indian policy, part literary criticism of Scott's poetry (which reads as a tribute to the writing of a close friend and professional colleague more than a critical interpretation), and part fishing adventure tale. In his remembrance of Scott, Edgar engages directly with the history of Aboriginal-Canadian relations. His perspective is one of complete agreement with a paternalistic government policy and Scott's role in implementing that policy.

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Between 1895 and 1948, Edgar published eight "perceptive articles on Scott's poetry, more than any other critic." See Sandra Campbell "A Fortunate Friendship: Duncan Campbell Scott and Pelham Edgar" in K.P. Stich, ed., *The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980.

Near the opening of his essay, Edgar offers "a few explanatory words [that] must suffice to set forth in a general way the methods which Canada has adopted for dealing with the Indian question" (Edgar 1952, 58). His snapshot of Canadian-First Nations relations presents a conflict-free trajectory of land surrender by the First Nations through treaties which the First Nations seem eager to make and even initiate "for money considerations" (58). The motive for initiating Treaty 9 is presented as arising from "the irresistible northward march of civilization" and as coming from the Ojibwa and Cree "who hunted in Ontario north of the Height of Land" and who "began in timid Indian fashion to press upon the Government a recognition of their claims" (58). This image needs to be viewed in the context of the historical background about Treaty 9 which I presented in Chapter One. Edgar notes that the treaty paid an initial eight dollars to every member of the included Indian bands "and a perpetual annuity thereafter of four dollars per head" (59). As I stated earlier, for less than forty thousand dollars, Treaty 9 secured over 90,000 square miles of land.

Edgar declares that "it will be conceded that the Province of Ontario treats its Indian population with a fairness that amounts to generosity" (59). Ontario compares favourably to Quebec, which "refuses to recognize the Indian title to waste lands of the Province, pays no annuities and withholds reserves" (59). Ontario "on the other hand, has purchased almost all its lands with a price and has conceded the Indians all the hunting and trading privileges which they have ever possessed" (59). Edgar presents it as a tribute to Ontario's fairness and generosity that it has purchased *almost* all of its lands (how it got those unpurchased lands is not part of his account) which therefore acknowledges

prior ownership. However, he describes the Cree and Ojibwa as those "who hunted in Ontario north of the Height of Land." There is an elision of ownership in this phrase, they merely "hunted" in this region.

Edgar explains that his diary-excerpts from the trip are intended to "provide an impressionistic background for my treatment of the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott" (59). He uses them to establish the authenticity of Scott's knowledge of Aboriginal culture as presented in his poems. In one passage he describes a scene of watching Ojibwa individuals, all of whom are women, engaged in their everyday activities in intimate settings:

> We used to stroll among the tents and wigwams in the evening light, and catch innumerable hints of colour and characteristic attitudes — the gleam of fire through the opened folds of the wigwam, and the yearning face of a blind woman crouched beside the bubbling pot. Under a rude strip of sailcloth which cannot shelter her from the wind or driving rain, a tattered crone squats on her rabbit-skin patching a moccasin. At the next tent door sits a young mother suckling her child. On her face as we pass is the shadow of quiet content. The prospect of hardship and retrospect of pain are alike obliterated in the joy of the living moment. The reader of Scott's poetry will realize from what authoritative experience his Indian pieces were written. He had no need to fabricate a spurious image of 'the noble savage' (66).

This passage depicting two white men walking among Ojibwa homes and peering through folds of wigwams embodies an underlying assumption that what these two men *see* can be immediately translated into authentic, authoritative, first-hand knowledge of the people and culture they are observing. The whole imperial apparatus of the production of the other through the eyes of the invader-settler that Pratt (1992) and Greenblatt (1991) and others have articulated is illustrated here.

Beyond Edgar's statement of Scott's authentic knowledge, the discussion of Scott's poetry in Edgar's "Travelling with a Poet" essay is very slim. He simply quotes long passages and says they are "marvelous." For example, he quotes from "A Scene at Lake Manitou" after setting the scene of the poem in a couple of sentences. This poem is cited immediately following Edgar's statement about Scott's poems having the "the ring of absolute truth" (Edgar, 68). From "A Scene at Lake Manitou:"

> Above the field on the rocky point
> Was a cluster of canvas tents,
> Nearly deserted, and here
> Between the heat of the rock and the heat of the sun
> The Widow Frederick.
> Whose Indian name means Stormy Sky,
> Was watching her son Matanack
> In the sunlight die,
> As she had watched his father die in the sunlight.
> With a branch of poplar leaves
> She kept the flies from his face.
> ...
> She had prayed to their Jesus,
> She had called on Mary His mother
> To save him, to keep him forever!
> The Holy Water and the Scapular!
> She had used all the Holy Water
> Father Pacifique had given her;
> ...
> There was nothing more to be done
> That Christians could do.
> Now she would call on the Powers of the Earth and the Air,
> The Powers of the Water;
> She would give to the Manitou
> That lived in the lake
> All her treasured possessions,
> And He would give her the lad.
> (Scott, *The Green Cloister*, 1935)

Stormy Sky begins to hurl her possessions into the lake, including her blankets, her gramophone and her hand-operated sewing machine. The "loafing Indians" watching the scene restrain her until "not conquered by them/ but subdued by her will/ She lay still." The woman's son is pronounced dead.

> She knew it was all in vain;
> He was slain by the foe
> That had slain his father.
> She put up her hair that had fallen over her eyes,
> And with her movements, weary and listless,
> Tidied her dress.
> Had gone to his father,
> To hunt in the Spirit Land
> And to be with Jesus and Mary.
> (Scott, *The Green Cloister,* 1935)

Edgar simply states: "this marvelous poem closes with a few lines of nature painting which image the prevailing mood." He then proclaims that another poem, "'At Gull Lake: August, 1810' is wrought with the same fidelity and power, and one is forced to the conclusion that no one in the range of our literature or any literature has approached Scott in his mastery of primitive themes" (Edgar, 70).

For Pelham Edgar, the observation of Aboriginal life that gave Scott's poems "the ring of truth" is linked to his assessment of Scott's role in transforming outmoded poetic depictions of what he terms the "spurious image of the 'noble savage'" (Edgar 1952, 66). Edgar explains that, prior to Scott's time, "the cult of primitiveness achieved a vogue in the eighteenth century, when the myth of the 'noble savage' exercised a prevailing fascination in polite society" (68). The myth "was at best an artificial fashion sustained by no knowledge of the crude facts involved. By the test of reality the literary projections of

the myth dissolve into thin air" (Edgar, 68). It seems that for Edgar the image of the "noble savage" is spurious because the "crude facts" reveal a less than noble reality, and not because the ideology of savagery needs to be challenged. For example, Edgar's description of "a tattered crone squatting on her rabbit-skin patching a moccasin" in the passage cited above, when read against prevailing notions of what counts as "civilized" culture, becomes one such "test of reality."

E.K. Brown, another important literary critic of Scott's work, also comments on what he sees as the absence of the myth of the 'noble savage' in Scott's "Indian poems." Brown finds that Scott's "poetry presents [Aboriginal people] not as noble savages, whose emotions run in courses unknown to us, surprising us by their strangeness, but as complex intelligible persons" (Brown 1943, 83). The remarks by Brown and Edgar that distinguish Scott's poetic depictions from the older, outmoded myth of the "noble savage" are significant in terms of a remembrance/pedagogy of colonialism engaged by their literary criticism. They address another, competing discourse about Aboriginal people which carries with it the historical residue of imperialism, in the sense of erroneous knowledge production or the projection of false myths onto the "natives." Against the backdrop of this earlier and inaccurate mythology, they position the memory of Scott's work as more modern, less mythological, more real.

E.K. Brown was a prolific critic who also taught in Canadian and American universities. Brown became friends with Scott through a literary correspondence.[12] They

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See Robert L. McDougall, *The Poet and the Critic*: *A Literary Correspondence Between D.C. Scott and E.K. Brown,* Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983.

were co-editors of a book of Archibald Lampman's poems in 1943 and corresponded from 1940 until Scott died in 1947. Dragland describes Brown as "the most rigorous and penetrating of the critics who knew Scott well" (Dragland 1974, 73). E.K. Brown also addressed the relationship between Scott's Indian Affairs position and his "Indian poems." In Brown's memoir (1951) he addresses Scott's work for the department of Indian Affairs:

> [Scott's] conception of the national duty to the Indians was simple and sound. It was the result not of close ethnological study, but of immense experience and imaginative understanding. The poet in him and the civil servant agreed in believing that the future of the Indians, if it were not to be extinction or degradation, depended on their being brought more and more nearly to the status of the white population. Special safeguards were a temporary necessity; but meanwhile by education and encouragement the Indians were to cease being interesting exotic relics and practice trying to hold their own in a society which could not be bent in their direction. Sometimes Duncan Scott felt that he should stress the special safeguards, the peculiar status, but it was to the end of bringing the Indians into the national society that he strove with that mixture of guile and idealism that is the mark of the highest sort of civil servant (Brown 1951, 26).

This passage engages directly with with a remembrance/pedagogy of colonization that rewrites the story of European conquest. Brown presents the potential "extinction or degradation" of Aboriginal people as inevitable and seeming to have no cause. Similarly, when Brown claims that "by education and encouragement the Indians were to cease being interesting exotic relics and practice trying to hold their own in a society which could not be bent in their direction" (Brown 1951, 26), he engages a discourse that fails to acknowledge how and for whom Aboriginal peoples were "interesting and exotic relics." It sounds as though that is what they were prior to Euro-Canadian policies of "improvement" through the "civilizing" process forced upon them by Canadian law. As

well, the longstanding history of Aboriginal peoples "holding their own" and being self-sufficient before the invasion and conquest of imperialism is erased. In this narrative, Aboriginal peoples must be "brought more nearly to the status of the white population." But what created the difference in status that needs to be corrected? The potential "extinction or degradation" of Aboriginal communities appear to exist in a dehistoricized vacuum, even as allusions to history are being made.

According to Brown, the two Indian poems most written about, "Watkewenies" and "The Onondaga Madonna," are "built on a feeling for the contrast of the savage powerful past of the race with its humbled present and hopeless future" (Brown 1951, 19). Here we have an instance of a remembrance/pedagogy with regards to the history of Aboriginal-Canadian relations and the history of colonization. Literary themes are being read through a particular version of history, and in turn the version of history becomes literary theme. Brown also suggests a kind of disinterested observation on Scott's part of an inevitable trajectory of progress, a path that has led from "powerful" to "humbled" to "hopeless" for Aboriginal peoples. Yet Scott was actively involved as an agent of policies which dictated the humbling of the present and the supposed hopelessness of the future. The policies embodied and enforced through the Indian Act were also part of the discourse of the "savage" which framed the past on its own terms.

One of Scott's northern trips, in the summer of 1899, led to the writing upon his return to Ottawa of what Brown terms two "extraordinary pieces, "Rapids at Night" and "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" (Brown 1951, 20). From "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon:"

Here in the midnight, where the dark mainland and island
Shadows mingle in shadow deeper, profounder,
Sing we the hymns of the churches, while the dead water
Whispers before us.
...

While our canoe, that floats dumb in the bursting thunder,
Gathers her voice in the quiet and thrills and whispers,
Presses her prow in the star-gleam and all her ripple
Lapses in blackness.

Sing we the sacred ancient hymns of the churches,
Chanted first in the old world nooks of the desert,
While in the wild, pellucid Nipigon reaches
Hunted the savage.

Now have the ages met in the Northern midnight,
And on the lonely, loon-haunted Nipigon reaches,
Rises the hymn of triumph and courage and comfort,
Adeste Fideles.

Tones that were fashioned when the faith brooded in darkness,
Joined with the sonorous vowels in the noble Latin,
Now are married with the long-drawn Ojibwa,
Uncouth and mournful.
...
Each long cadence, flying like a dove from her shelter
Deep in the shadow, wheels for a throbbing moment,
Poises in utterance, returning in circles of silver
To nest in the silence.
(*Poems of DCS,* 23-24).

Brown (1951) locates "Powassan's Drum" as "the greatest of the dream poems, the most ominous, the most nightmarish, the most thrilling" (Brown 1951, 34). The poem was based on an encounter Scott had with an Ojibwa medicine man during Scott's 1905 Treaty 9 expedition through northern Ontario (Dragland 1992, 156-7). When Scott and his Treaty party arrived at a Hudson's Bay Post expecting to find the Ojibwa community

of Lac Seul gathered to greet them, they were disappointed. The community was gathered several miles away, engaged in the final day of a three-day White Dog Feast, which was one of the cultural practices the department of Indian Affairs had outlawed. The sound of a drum had been audible to Scott's party for some miles as they approached the post (Dragland 1992,155). In "Powassan's Drum" the drum becomes overwhelmingly powerful and interpreted by Scott as being an expression of hatred.

> Throb — throb — throb — throb
> Is this throbbing a sound
> Or an ache in the air?
> Pervasive as light
> Measured and inevitable
> It seems to float from no distance,
> But to live in the listening world —
> Throb — throb— throb— throb — throbbing
> The sound of Powassan's Drum.
> ...
> He crouches in his dwarf wigwam
> Wizened with fasting,
> Fierce with thirst
> Making great medicine
> In memory of hated things dead
> Or in menace of hated things to come
> ...
> Has it gone on forever,
> As the pulse of Being?
> Will it last till the world's end
> As the pulse of Being?
> ...
> (*Poems of DCS*, 59-63)

Into "Powassan's Drum," Brown argues, "Scott put almost every power he had — his feeling for the Indians, his feeling for the wilderness, his responsiveness to horror, his sense of the links between dream and reality, something of his reflective power, his

command of the intricate structure akin to that of musical works, and to a magnificent degree, his mastery of a free verse that bends to every impulse of the spirit" (Brown 1951, 34). In his evaluation, Brown makes an implicit connection between Scott's government position and his knowledge of and feeling for Aboriginal people.

In a more explicit passage, Brown addresses Scott's role in government and praises it. The passage underlines the notion of Scott as an expert commentator on Aboriginal life and culture through the direct contact afforded by his Indian Affairs position. Brown writes:

> Not a few of the poems in which he achieves this peculiar kind of perfection have to do with Indians. Of all Canadian poets, indeed of all Canadian imaginative writers, he has best succeeded in making great literature out of such distinctively Canadian material as our aborigines supply. This is wholly fitting. The entire professional career of Duncan Scott was passed in the federal Department of Indian Affairs in which he rose, while still young, to be Deputy Superintendent General, a post which he held for about twenty years. During that period and indeed for some time before his formal accession to the post, he was the chief molder of departmental policy, and administrator of rare imaginative sympathy and almost perfect wisdom...He was always eager to see his charges, and especially in his later years in the department when he had greater freedom of movement was much among them, both on the reservations and in the wild and remote areas where the Indians continue to lead a life which preserves much of the nomadic and picturesque quality of the past. (Brown 1943, 83)

Another instance of a literary critic engaging in a direct retelling of history is found in the work of G. Ross Roy (1961), who provides in some ways the most dramatic positioning of Scott's "Indian poems" as authoritative interpretations of historical necessity. Roy engages in a reading practice which historicizes Scott's Indian poems in

relation to First Nations-Canadian relations and government policy.

> It is perfectly natural that the Indians should provide Scott with the subject of several of his poems. He knew them, he loved them, and above all, he understood them. He saw them in the final days of their glory and he saw them transformed by the onslaught of civilization, for, unable to adapt to the Whites, their race degraded itself and almost disappeared in intermingling with the white race. In two sonnets Scott examines this change (Roy 1961, 143).

Roy reads one of the sonnets, "Watkwenies," as representing "the young Indian, [named] Watkwenies, in the flower of her youth, which corresponds to the flower of the age of her race:

> Vengeance was once her nation's lore and law:
> When the tired sentry stooped above the rill,
> Her long knife flashed, and hissed, and drank its fill;
> (*Poems of DCS*, 230)

In the second half of the poem, "Scott makes us see the old woman as she is now. Her once valiant hands are of no use now but to receive money from the government" (Roy, 144).

> Now clothed with many an ancient flap and fold,
> And wrinkles like an apple kept till May,
> She weights the interest-money in her palm,
> And when the agent calls her valiant name,
> Hears, like the war-whoops of her perished day,
> The lads playing snow-snake in the stinging cold.
> (*Poems of DCS*, 230).

Roy concludes that "one feels that [Scott] exposes this state of affairs only to draw our attention to a deplorable fact — even if the fate of the Indians was in some way inevitable" (143). Roy illustrates the way in which literary criticism of Scott's "Indian

poems" is both constitutive of and constituted through memory formations of the history of First Nations-Canadian relations. He remembers Scott as narrating history accurately in his poems, adding to the archive as I have suggested, but also responding sensibly to the perceived outcome of history within a hegemonic narrative of colonial conquest and settlement in Canada. Roy concludes his long essay:

> Scott is unsurpassed in his portrayal of the Indians; he is at once both stern and gentle toward them, as one is toward his own child. He understands them, and, while he deplores their weaknesses, he exalts their strengths; he loves them. He has preserved in our literature traces not only of the race but of an era, both of which have almost vanished (160).

Scott is granted not only the ability to see, understand and represent the cultures of Aboriginal peoples as observed by a Euro-Canadian outsider travelling among them and dealing with them as government agent; he is also seen to possess authoritative knowledge of individual Aboriginal character's *inner life*; to be able to know and represent the inner thoughts and feelings, in short, the subjectivity of Aboriginal people. Edgar, for example, credits Scott with "a sympathetic knowledge of the facts and of their natural setting, and an uncanny psychological penetration into the movement of the Indian mind and character" (70). Other critics make similar claims that Scott was "able to penetrate the movement of the Indian mind" because of his first-hand knowledge of Aboriginal life in the north and across Canada. Logan and French (1924), for example, read Scott's poetry as speaking for the inner lives of the characters he depicts in his poems. Logan & French assert that Scott not only can speak for and represent the interior life of characters he depicts, but that he *needs* to implant thoughts "the Indians" could not

have themselves due to their supposed lack of civilization: "In his *New World Lyrics and Ballads (1905)* Scott aims to reveal the kind of mind or thought which the strange humanity of the Northwest in Canada — the Indian heart in the wild North of Canada — contains...Scott's Ballads are the product of a reflective mind *thinking into* Indian mind the thoughts of a civilized man" (Logan & French 1924, 61-62, emphasis in original). As a result of this capacity of Scott's, Logan and French assert, "'The Half Breed Girl' [is] a striking essay of Indian introspection." (62). Bernard Muddiman (1914) makes the same point when he evaluates "The Half-breed Girl" as "a particularly illuminating study of the mentality of the half-breed girl," advocating that the poem be read to "appreciate its beauties of introspection" (Muddiman, 39).

In contemporary literary criticism as well, the reading of Scott's poems as representations of the inner lives of the Aboriginal characters can be found. For example, in his analysis of "At Gull Lake: August, 1810," Dragland (1992) claims that unlike the Scottish trader, Nairne, who rejects the Saulteaux woman Keejigo, Scott is inside Keejigo's culture. "Keejigo's world, that lovely, integral microcosm, was created by a Scott who went *inside* it, and thus is not like Nairne" (Dragland 1992, 206, emphasis in original). In each of these evaluations of Scott's insight we see a coupling of ethnographic knowledge with a notion of the power of poetic understanding to produce what is deemed authentic knowledge of the other.

For most of his literary critics, Scott's political authority over Aboriginal peoples thus renders him an authority about them. Greenblatt (1991) contradicts the claim of European knowledge of indigenous peoples in *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of*

*the New World.* Critiquing "early European responses to the New World and the uses of symbolic technology" (Greenblatt, 6) as crucial to power relations, Greenblatt employs the term "mimetic capital" meaning "the stock of images along with the means of producing those images and circulating them according to prevailing market forces" (Greenblatt, 6). Mimetic capital, then, is another of the social technologies of literary criticism. Greenblatt posits that the degree to which we can call "knowledge" that which the European explorers discovered and reported about the new world is highly debatable. "We can be certain only that European representations of the New World tell us something about the European practice of representation" (Ibid, 12). Despite such strongly made claims of Europeans about European rationality and reason in contrast to the "primitive" irrationality of "the natives," for the explorers "their over-riding interest is not knowledge of the other but practice upon the other, and the principal faculty involved in generating these representations is not reason but imagination" (Ibid,12).

In a related vein, Terry Goldie (1989 and 1990) looks at the "semiotic control" exercised by non-Aboriginal representations of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian literature. He discusses images of "the indigene," to use his term, as re-presentations that lead back to other images in a semiotic network of signs that produce/support domination. "History awarded semiotic control to the invaders" (Goldie 1990, 111). Goldie draws from Said's work on orientalism to conceptualize how such texts "create not only knowledge but the very reality they appear to describe" (Goldie 1989, 6). His basic theory is that signs lead back to signs in a semiotic circle that become a discourse with its own tradition (Goldie 1989, 5). In this sense, I am suggesting that we need to read the remembrances of Scott

as ideological and complicit with the colonial forms of knowledge affiliated with domination.

What is the remembrance/pedagogy of colonization in the evaluative discourse of "the ring of absolute truth?" Colonial "fieldwork" encoded in literature is educational for Scott, the settler subject, and gives him access to the ethnographic gaze. For most of Scott's literary critics, there is nothing ethically or politically objectionable about the imperial context that creates these fieldwork opportunities and thus produces the site of learning/teaching for Scott. The implicit assumption is that members of the dominant group have direct access to knowledge of the subjugated other and can speak about and for them with credibility. This representation of the Aboriginal other is valuable to the metropolitan center who otherwise could not "know" them, and it is also valuable because it preserves a way of life that is "passing." The passing is framed as an inevitable result of progress.

The critical practice "ring of absolute truth" is fundamentally concerned with the issue of knowledge and valorizing Scott as a voice of authoritative knowledge. This approach engages most directly with remembrances of the history of colonialism. It historicizes Scott's "Indian poems" by addressing the context of Scott's Indian Affairs work, and Canadian policy on Indian Affairs. It directly, if superficially, addresses the question of First Nation-Canadian relations. This critical practice instantiates the idea that knowledge of the other is secured through access to eye witness encounters. It seeks to secure a position for the writer that fits with a moral and ethical standard encoded in the Eurocentric ideology of the "civilized." By affirming the authenticity of Scott's

knowledge as represented in his poems, the literary critics position him as able to translate cultural knowledge into aesthetic form.

## Chapter 3

### "Universal Symbols of Man"

I have said that a touchstone for my exploration of the remembrance/pedagogies of First Nations-Canadian relations that circulate in Scott literary criticism is provided by looking at how various texts of literary criticism address the relationship between Scott's poetic depictions of Aboriginal characters and his influential role as an administrator of state policies of colonialist assimilation. How — or whether — this relationship is addressed in the literary criticism is a touchstone for asking after the history of colonization as it is remembered by Scott's literary critics. In the first evaluative discourse I looked at in Chapter Two, the relationship was addressed directly and Scott's Indian poems were historicized through a consideration of Scott's role in the department of Indian Affairs along with the broader context of government policies toward Aboriginal peoples. Narrations of First Nations-Canadian history were explicit. In the evaluative discourse I will discuss in this chapter, the relationship of Scott's Indian Affairs work to his poetry is not foregrounded. Instead we find historicization is displaced by a discourse I am calling "universal symbols of man," in which symbols and themes are seen to transcend the specificity of history and cultural difference. At a certain level, the evaluative discourse of universal symbols appears to dehistoricize Scott's "Indian poems" and perhaps to render less relevant the question of remembrance/pedagogies of First Nations-Canadian relations in literary criticism of this mode. However, an examination of Scott criticism that employs this discourse illustrates significant ways in which certain learnings are instantiated about the history of First Nations-Canadian relations.

While I have been discussing the formation of public memory of colonial history in Canada, what I am tracing in the three evaluative discourses I have identified in Scott literary criticism are more accurately described as specific mechanisms of forgetting. Forgetting suggests absence, something or someone missing, while remembrance evokes presence. Yet it is insufficient to speak of the dominant cultural amnesia in Canada with regards to its violent colonial historical and present-day First Nations-Canadian relations merely as forgetting. As Irwin-Zarecka suggests in her study of the dynamics of collective memory, "the general notion of forgetting is not enough (Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 116). She explains that "the term absence can be misleading...The idea that something is missing operates against the background of something else which is very much there. Most of the time when we speak of forgetting, we are speaking of displacement (or replacement) of one version of the past by another" (Irwin-Zarecka, 118). Absences, then, are actually displacements and replacements.

In the first critical practice I discussed, which credits Scott's poems as having "the absolute ring of truth," the evaluative discourse turns on issues of knowledge, authentic voice and authorizing Scott as the knowing subject. The mechanism of forgetting involved in this technology of remembrance works by valorizing a narrative of history that assumes an imperialist right to invade and dominate, an historical narrative grounded in the ideologies of progress, manifest destiny and racial/cultural superiority. A counter-hegemonic, anti-colonialist vision of history is displaced and replaced. The second evaluative discourse of universal symbols effects a different kind of displacement.

A number of critics read Scott's images of Aboriginal people as symbols of "man"

and of "universal" themes. "The Forsaken" is widely considered to be one of the most accomplished of Scott's "major" poems, and it has often been read symbolically. The poem presents in two parts a Chippewa woman undergoing with calm acceptance two extreme moments of survival in the north. In the first part she is alone in a snow storm, near starvation and fishing with her baby on her back.

> Once in the winter
> Out on a lake
> ...
> And far from the hunters,
> A Chippewa woman
> With her sick baby,
> Crouched in the last hours
> Of a great storm.
> Frozen and hungry,
> She fished through the ice
> With a line of the twisted
> Bark of the cedar,
> And a rabbit-bone hook
> Polished and barbed;
> Fished with the bare hook
> All through the wild day,
> Fished and caught nothing;
> While the young chieftain
> Tugged at her breasts,
> Or slept in the lacings
> Of the warm *tikanagan*
> ...
> Valiant, unshaken,
> She took of her own flesh,
> Baited the fish-hook,
> Drew in a gray-trout,
> Drew in his fellows,
> ...
> Valiant, unshaken,
> She faced the long distance,
> Wolf-haunted and lonely,
> Sure of her goal
> And the life of her dear one
> (*Poems of DC Scott*, 28)

The woman then walks back through the snow storm to her home, saving herself and her son. In the second part of the poem the same woman, now elderly, is abandoned by her family in a Chippewa cultural practice based on survival for the group as a whole. "The Forsaken" was based on a story Scott heard from the manager of a Hudson Bay post Nipigon House (Brown 1951, 22).

> Years and years after,
> When she was old and withered,
> When her son was an old man
> And his children filled with vigour,
> They came in their northern tour on the verge of winter,
> To an island in a lonely lake.
> ...
> Launched their canoes and slunk away through the islands,
> Left her alone forever,
> Without a word of farewell,
> Because she was old and useless,
> Like a paddle broken and warped,
> Or a pole that was splintered.
> Then, without a sigh,
> Valiant, unshaken,
> She smoothed her dark locks under her kerchief,
> Composed her shawl in state,
> Then folder her hands ridged with sinews and corded
> with veins,
> Folded them across her breasts spent with the nourishing
> of children,
> ...
> Then there was born a silence deeper than silence,
> Then she had rest.
>
> (*The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, 1926, 28-31)

Logan and French (1924) discuss "The Forsaken" (originally published in Scott's 1905 *New World Lyrics and Ballads)*, stating that "Scott's genius is lyrical; but in these so called Ballads he attempts dramatic situation and emotion. It all lands him in recondite

psychological symbolism, as, for instance, in "The Forsaken"...what we get from these poems is Scott's perception and revealment of spiritual Beauty in loneliness..." (62). E.K. Brown is another among the critics who read "The Forsaken" as a symbolic tale. Brown writes:

> What is the real theme of "The Forsaken"? It is nothing less than a universal tragedy, the tragedy of Lear and Goriot, the ruinous intrusion into filial relationships of egoism and economic realism. Those who once were strong become weak; their value dwindles and those whom they reared from helpless weakness to strength discard them as costly superfluities. (E.K. Brown 1943, 83).

Brown elsewhere defines "The Forsaken" as a narrative "that turns on primary passions and demands the acceptance of painful truths" (Brown 1951, 22). Another critic, G. Ross Roy writes of "The Forsaken" — "What dignity there is in Scott's poem, where the old woman accepts her fate with true greatness of soul! When the body is defeated, there remains always, according to Scott, the indomitable quality of the spirit. And it is because of this spirit that hope is eternally born anew" (1961, 144).

While some literary critics see "The Forsaken" as an objective, non-judgmental view of a cultural practice, historian Patterson suggests that "the poet emphasizes what he sees as the unnaturalness of the Indian's nature" (Patterson 1967, 2). Echoing Patterson, Mandel suggests "Scott's 'The Forsaken' is surely a reflection, albeit sympathetic, on modes of behaviour beyond white man's, that is, "civilized," comprehension" (Mandel 1987, 37).

One of the central "universal themes" critics have read in Scott's "Indian poems" is the theme of "resolution of opposing forces." For example, Pacey (1948) articulates a

symbolic reading of Scott's poems that centers on resolution and the role of human suffering. Pacey finds that "the dominant mood [in Scott's poetry] is heroic endurance" (Pacey, 102).

> The dominant tone of Scott's poetry is quiet, in spite of the violent content of many of his best poems. Though his poems usually involve a stormy climax, they almost always come to a peaceful close. There is a dialectical pattern to most of his poems: two forces battle one another until their powers are spent or their differences resolved and peace ensues" (Pacey, 101).

Pacey cites "On the Way to the Mission" as an example. In this poem, two white trappers follow an Aboriginal man through the winter woods as he pulls a toboggan which they believe is loaded with furs. The trappers overcome the man and kill him, only to find that under the blanket on his toboggan is the man's deceased wife. He is on the way to the Mission to bury her. Pacey reads the close of the poem as a resolution when the two trappers "flee and leave the corpses in the silent moonlight":

> The moon went on to her setting
> And covered them with shade.
> (Scott in *The Poems of DCS,* 27).

For Pacey (1948), "the final peacefulness in ..."On the Way to the Mission" is achieved not by the transcendental leap but by the stoical acceptance of suffering as the inevitable lot of man" (Pacey, 122).

In his chapter on Scott in the 1965 edition of *Literary History of Canada,* Daniells (1965) also addresses the theme of symbolic resolution of conflict. Daniells' writes "it is easy to regard these [Indian] poems as studies of life in the wilds or manifestations of their author's deep sympathy with the lot of the northern Indians" (420). However, he cautions, that is "to miss their ultimate meaning, which is the resolution of

violence either into the calm of nature or into nature's own impersonal fury of stormy wind and restless and rushing water"[13] (420).

Gary Geddes (1968) evaluates the themes of Scott's poetry through a related paradigm of resolution. "Life, in Scott's poetry, is a movement toward rest, a rest which is common to all men — the poet, the religious and the oppressed of every kind" (Geddes 1968, 175). Geddes cites "At Gull Lake: 1810" as an example of this process at work. "Even the violent death of Keejigo in 'At Gull Lake' becomes a release from suffering, a final, beautiful merging with the natural cycle of the universe. The accompanying storm brings the rainbow; the moon changes its shade for the perfect glow of the prairie lily. Her death is a victory, a final reward" (Geddes, 175).

> The old wives dragged her away
> And threw her over the bank
> Like a dead dog.
> ...
> She rose changing her dusky shade for the glow
> Of the prairie lily, till free of the blemish of colour
> She came to her zenith without a cloud or star,
> A lovely perfection, snow-pure in the heaven of midnight.
> (*Poets of the Confederation*, 122)

Geddes finds that in his "Indian poems," Scott "discovered beauty again... in the beauty of human suffering" (Geddes, 170). For Geddes, "the tragic killing of Keejigo in 'At Gull Lake: August, 1810'" is an example of the beauty of human suffering with its evocation, after Keejigo has risen into the sky, "after the beauty of terror the beauty of peace" (Scott,

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For Daniells (1965), "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" is the best example of "Scott's wilderness pieces [in which] violence of emotion matches the rigour of the land itself." The other principal poems in this group, for Daniells, are "On the Way to the Mission," "The Forsaken," "The Half-breed Girl," and "Powassan's Drum."

*Poets of the Confederation*, 122).

Significantly, the role of symbolization in western literary aesthetics has been tied historically to the ideological work of resolving opposing social forces and conceptual dichotomies. In his analysis of the rise of English studies, Eagleton (1983) discusses the centrality of the symbol within the newly developed aesthetic theory of literature at the turn of the eighteenth century. Eagleton writes:

> At the centre of aesthetic theory at the turn of the eighteenth century is the semi-mystical doctrine of the symbol. For Romanticism, indeed, the symbol becomes the panacea for all problems. With it, a whole set of conflicts which were felt to be insoluble in ordinary life — between subject and object, the universal and the particular, the sensuous and the conceptual, material and spiritual, order and spontaneity — could be magically resolved...The dynamic, spontaneous energies of social progress [taking place in this period of industrialization and social change] were to be fostered but curbed of their potentially anarchic force by a restraining social order. The symbol fused together motion and stillness, turbulent content and organic form, mind and world... All of its various parts worked spontaneously together for the common good, each in its subordinate place; and it is therefore hardly surprising to find the symbol, or the literary artefact as such, being regularly offered throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an ideal model of human society itself. (Terry Eagleton 1983, 21-22).

I want to draw a connection between the way literary criticism reads Scott's use of symbolism and the political implications Eagleton sees in the symbol in English aesthetic theory[14]. The literary ideal of resolution of conflicting or opposing forces tends to

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The nineteenth century perspective Eagleton discusses can be applied to Scott because even though his life spanned both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1862-1947), as one critic has argued, Scott could be re-classified as a 19th century poet who might be seen alongside his spiritual mentors, Coleridge, Tennyson and Arnold (Gary Geddes, "Piper of Many Tunes: Duncan Campbell Scott"(1968), 166) As a poet, Scott was most influenced by the Romantic tradition.

naturalize and thus dehistoricize the particular social and historical settings depicted in the poems.

Another kind of symbolic reading of Scott's "Indian poems" focuses on a psychological interpretation of "opposing forces" whereby the conflicts in the poems are an external manifestation of the state of a single universalized human psyche. D.G. Jones (1970) evaluates Scott's poetry in this way. In his study of images and themes in Canadian literature, Jones discusses "At Gull Lake: August, 1810" through a psychoanalytic theory of a primitive-civilized dichotomy, which is symbolized by Aboriginal and European characters respectively, but which he ultimately locates as a dichotomy within "man" that needs to be resolved, otherwise essential harmonies between man and nature are out of balance (Jones, 105). The dramas and conflicts enacted in Scott's "Indian poems" are for Jones an outer manifestation of inner psychological states of a posited "universal man." Jones writes "again and again [in Canadian literature], the protagonists who win a spiritual victory are those who come to terms with the savage, accepting it within themselves and yet not allowing it to destroy them. On a personal and psychological level, it is a Jungian integration of the personality that they achieve" (71).

According to Jones, in "At Gull Lake: August, 1810," Keejigo's troubled relationship to her husband, Tabashaw of the Saulteaux, and the Scottish trader, Nairne of the Orkneys, is an enactment of this inner dilemma. Keejigo's rejection by both Tabashaw and Nairne is read as symbolic of "the fate of Eros in a culture which cannot embrace and integrate the irrational within the rational order, which excludes or ignores

or degrades passion" (Jones, 109). When this occurs, "the irrational energies of life continue to go their own way, uncontrolled and furious" (109). For Jones, Tabashaw is "the irrational man" (109), "the primitive man" (109) and Nairne "the civilized white man" (109). In rejecting the passionate Keejigo, Jones suggests, "neither catches the glory of life; both increase the darkness around them. They are antithetical but equally destructive" (109).

A view based on notions of "the primitive/civilized dichotomy within" is echoed by another critic, Stan Dragland (1974) who determines that Scott's poetry "comprehends both the primal and the sophisticated, the savage and the civilized. Scott's wilderness is almost always balanced and defined by civilization and vice-versa, because each is simultaneously in the soul of man" (Dragland 1974, 95).

Employing the evaluative discourse of universal symbols as Jones and Dragland do, "the Indian," especially in the setting of the northern wilderness is a symbol for "the primitive" which is a symbol for "the primitive" in "man," that is in all human makeup. Attributing a universal human status to images of Aboriginals in Scott's poems would seem to have a humanizing effect on the cultural status of Aboriginal peoples. But the problem with this conception is that it leaves untouched the division of actual social subjects into two groups, the primitive and the civilized, and the power of the mimetic capital, to use Greenblatt's term, of such a dichotomy. The demarcation of Aboriginal peoples as primitive and Europeans as civilized has had drastic consequences for historical subjects. Saying that "we are all primitive" does not dispel the powerful effect of claiming that certain groups of people are primitive and therefore "require, even

"beseech domination," as Said puts it (1994, 8) through imposed governance.

Evaluating poems through a discourse of universal themes is not limited to Scott's "Indian poems," of course. This is a staple of literary criticism in general. However, it is the inter-action between the specificity of the historically produced images and the generalizing of themes that concerns me. In Scott criticism, the evaluative practice of universal themes does not address First Nations-Canadian relations directly. The historicization of Scott's poetry — its subject matter and the circumstances of its making and reception — is placed in the background. Yet historically specific forms play a role in evaluating and interpreting the poems. Specific images of Aboriginal peoples as the "native Other" are presented and become intelligible within colonialist discourses, but then become merely a normalized background for loftier themes. The position of Scott the writer is secured not through affirmation of his authoritative knowledge but rather through an assessment of his deployment of elevated techniques of expression.

The way in which the historically specific and ideological images of Aboriginal characters are abstracted in symbolic readings of Scott is evident when Jones asserts that "the conditions of the Indian is but a specific and notable instance of a condition that preoccupies Scott in a number of poems [including those with non-Indian subjects, and that is]...the suppression of passion leading to a consequent stagnation or paralysis of life" (Jones 1970, 105). For Jones, "Watkwenies" and "The Onondaga Madonna" are examples of a universal theme of stifled vitality (104). Jones describes the first section of the poem in which we are told "of a woman who fought against the white soldiers in her youth." In the second section "we see her standing idle, wrinkled, waiting for her

government pension." He quotes:

> She weighs the interest-money in her palm,
> And when the Agent calls her valiant name,
> Hears, like the war-hoops of her perished day,
> The lads playing snow-snake in the stinging cold.
> (*Poems of DCS*, 230)

In this portrayal, he continues, "we infer the frustration, the sense of humiliation and impotence in this Indian woman" (Jones, 104). A universal symbolic reading both depends upon the narration of history implicit in Jones' interpretation of the poem yet at the same time side-steps any implication of the poet or the critic in that history. Similarly, Jones reads "The Half-Breed Girl" as an instance of the theme of stifled vitality. He views the mixed-race girl depicted in the poem as "psychologically divided between the incomprehensible inheritance of her Scottish father and the no longer relevant inheritance of her Indian mother [so that] she is paralyzed in her ability to act. She cannot live in terms of either inheritance, and her vital energies are dissipated in frustration:"

> Her dreams are undiscovered,
> Shadows trouble her breast,
> When the time for resting cometh
> Then least is she at rest.
> (*Poems of DCS*, 55)

For the half-breed girl in Scott's poem "her existence becomes a living death" (104):

> She covers her face with her blanket,
> Her fierce soul hates her breath,
> As it cries with a sudden passion
> For life or death.
> (*Poems of DCS* , 56)

From the perspective of Jones' symbolic reading of Scott's poems, the specificity of the

social and cultural situations depicted and the historical context of colonial First Nations-Canadian relations in which the female characters are presented is subsumed into the larger, overarching theme of "stifled vitality."

What learnings does aestheticization instantiate and pass on about the history of colonialism? A key effect is *normalization*, the normalization of colonial relations of domination through the presentation of such relations as mere background, as taken for granted. The other key element is a legitimation of the text as an instance of "civilized culture." The discourse of universal symbols and themes in Scott criticism encodes the authority of cultural forms that are deeply associated with western culture. This evaluative discourse works as a technology of remembrance through the articulation and confirmation of "civilized" values, subjectivity and culture. The hegemony of a notion of "civilized" as being a property of European cultures over and against what Goldberg terms "the conceptual order of the primitive" (Goldberg 1994, 155) is a cornerstone to the versions of Canadian history from the perspective of a colonial power justifying its own actions. Critical practices of "universal symbols" are articulated with remembrance practices that depend upon the civilized/primitive dichotomy to make sense. In this sense, the discourse of universal symbols and themes employed in Scott criticism becomes part of an ideology that supports imperial conquest. It helps to produce a structure of reference and attitude toward colonialism.

The remembrance/pedagogy of history of colonialism in Canada at work in the readings of Scott's "Indian poems" as symbolic of "universal themes of man" works on a number of levels simultaneously. While specific and historically produced notions of "the

Indian" and "the half breed" are circulated and re-produced, they are read, however, merely as symbols for larger, universal themes about "man." This kind of evaluative reading practice skirts the epistemic violence of the symbols themselves. What the images that are read as symbols are *performing*, in terms of the production of ideological "knowledge" about Aboriginal people takes place without comment in this symbolizing approach. The designation of certain historically specific and ideologically inflected images as symbols for something universal is defined as central. Only the themes that are being symbolized are addressed by the criticism. The remembrance/pedagogy is one of a powerful combination of *display* of the "Indian" signifier along with an *effacement* of the particular meanings that are being produced by and read from the symbol. There is a kind of now you see it, now you don't quality. Colonialist tropes are engaged but then skirted. The learnings about the history of First Nations-Canadian relations here effects a doubled (or more) remembrance/pedagogy of Aboriginal people viewed from a Eurocentric perspective. While a number of qualities and a powerful narrative of history are being conveyed which generally either erase or, more usually, justify European colonization and cultural dominance, they are not articulated in the criticism. This involves a reading practice which, unlike the first one I have discussed, does not historicize Scott's poems but instead focuses on aesthetic forms which present Aboriginal people in de-historicized terms but precisely through forms which have their own European histories.

Within the symbolic narrative is a narrative of history that is deeply implicated with what Said terms "the imagination of empire" expressed through cultural forms such as literature which produce a "structure of attitude and reference toward imperialism."

The structure of a symbolic struggle between "light and darkness," between "rational and irrational," between "reason and passion" represented in literary criticism on Scott's poems (and beyond) can be mapped onto social and political discourses that differentiate Aboriginal peoples from Europeans and later from Euro-Canadians under colonialism.

What happens to the memory of colonization of First Nations peoples by Euro-Canadians in this remembrance/pedagogy? There is nothing to be accountable for because the symbols are recuperated into universal themes, they are elevated into a significant human story that "transcends" the mere images of history employed to reach that transcendent plane.

The evaluative discourse of universal symbols and themes attempts to locate the "real meaning" of Scott's "Indian poems" above and beyond history and cultural difference. Yet the explanatory power of the universal themes derives from particular constructions of Aboriginal and European identity, such as the primitive/civilized dichotomy, which are historically produced representations. These representations are also cornerstones of imperialist narrations of First Nations-Canadian relations in history, without which justificatory narrations would not "make sense." As well, the literary form of the symbol and its elevated stature in literary criticism is historically specific with an ideological function.

Native symbols are figures in myths, national founding myths, and these myths work in the way that Barthes identifies as ideology transformed into myth, which "transforms history into nature," (qtd. in MacDonald 1994, 5) making "innocent" or "natural" certain abstractions that might otherwise be difficult to think about or accept, or

that in their essence are political (MacDonald 1994, 5). In his study of the language of empire, MacDonald (1994) argues that "defenses and explanations of imperialism...insist on sliding into myths of legitimation, stories which work to justify conquest and colonization. Myth is a narrative that 'improves' the fact, constructing a new and vibrant 'reality'. Myth simplifies and reduces the problematical to an obvious 'truth'" (Ibid, 5). The myths stand in for and stand in the way of a very different engagement with history, one which requires the development, circulation and legitimation of a public memory of violence and trauma in which non-Aboriginal Canadians from differing social locations are addressed as participants in a relationship that continues and calls for ethical responses.

## Chapter 4

### i) "Pure Poetry Versus Contaminated Politics:" The"Two Opposing Sides" Question of D.C. Scott

In the third evaluative discourse I have identified as prevalent in Scott criticism, elements of the first two discourses, in a sense, meet and create what becomes an unresolvable contradiction for the critics who would separate poetry from politics, or aesthetics from history. In this third critical practice, the historicizing approach of the "ring of absolute truth," which reads Scott's "Indian poems" in relation to his career in the department of Indian Affairs, is engaged in correspondence with an aestheticizing approach which locates its evaluative criteria outside the realm of history and the politics of cultural difference, like the second discourse of universal symbols. If the "ring of absolute truth" is fundamentally concerned with claims to authentic knowledge, and "universal symbols" with claims to having culture as a possession of the "civilized," the critical practice I am calling "pure poetry versus contaminated politics,"after a comment by Stan Dragland (in Cullingham 1995), is centrally concerned with ethics. This discourse evaluates the author as much as the poems themselves, and it does so through a framework that challenges the colonialist context of the making and reception of the poems. An ethical evaluation of Duncan Campbell Scott as a person is held in tension with an evaluation of him as a poet.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, earlier critics such as A.J.M. Smith (1948), Pelham Edgar (1952), E.K. Brown (1943, 1951), G. Ross Roy (1961) and R. Daniells (1965) expressed either explicit or implicit agreement with Canadian government policies

of assimilation and "civilization" of Aboriginal peoples, and therefore gave a nod of approval to Scott's role in the department of Indian Affairs. Some more contemporary critics, however, take issue with the policies Scott administered yet at the same time admire his poetry. They view Scott as having "two sides" — on one side, a sensitive, compassionate poet, on the other, a cold-hearted, government bureaucrat carrying out orders according to the ideology of his day. This third approach is the most contemporary and emerges from critics who critique the justifying tenets of colonialism.

Melvin Dagg (1972) makes the point strongly in his assessment that "Scott the government official and Scott the poet reveal two entirely different aspects of a single man. Scott, the head of Indian Affairs, justifies assimilation, stating 'final results may be attained...by merging of the Indian race with the whites,' only by sublimating private poetic feelings" which then arise, Dagg believes, in Scott's poems. Dagg presents highly speculative readings of Scott's poems to illustrate his argument. One of the poems Dagg cites as evidence of Scott's "private poetic feelings" is "At Gull Lake: August, 1810," (discussed in Chapter Three) which he claims is "clearly an anti-assimilation poem" (Dagg 1972, 190). Dagg bases his notion that "At Gull Lake: August, 1810" is an anti-assimilation poem on his reading of two lines of the poem. These lines appear in the section of the poem in which the female character Keejigo speaks to herself, "to her heart," in a style that is meant by Scott to replicate "the beautiful speech of the Saulteaux." One of three verses of this speech is as follows:

> Take the flower in your hand,
> The wind in your nostrils;
> I am here my beloved;
> Release the captive,

> Heal the wound under the feathers.
> (*Poets of the Confederation*, 120)

According to Dagg, "the lines 'release the captive/ Heal the wound under the feathers' are...an imagistic reference to [Keejigo's] birth, the wound perpetuated by her white father, significantly, a hunter, upon her Indian mother, Oshawan...[Keejigo] feels that the wound can only be 'healed' by reaffirming the white blood within her," by "assimilating with a white man" (Dagg, 188). This explains her motivation for offering herself to the Scottish trader, Nairne of the Orkneys. Dagg reads Scott as making an "explicit comment" against assimilation because Scott creates a narrative in which Keejigo is rejected by Nairne and then a storm erupts, which is meant to be emblematic of social discord (188). Another poem Dagg considers as evidence for his argument is "Watkwenies." This poem presents a before and after picture of a woman whose name "Watkwenies" means "the woman who conquers" (Goldie 1989, 93). Dagg reads Scott's use of her name in a literal rather than ironic way, as other critics have. The first verse presents her in an earlier era, triumphant but "blood thirsty" for vengeance.

> Vengeance was once her nation's lore and law'
> When the tired sentry stooped above the rill,
> Her long knife flashed, and hissed, and drank its fill;
> Dimly below her dripping wrist she saw,
> One wild hand, pale as death and weak as straw,
> Clutch at the ripple in the pool, while shrill
> Sprang through the dreaming hamlet on the hill,
> The war-cry of the triumphant Iroquois.
> (*Poems of DCS*, 230)

The second verse portrays the woman in Scott's era, receiving her money on "treaty day," when yearly annuities are paid.

> Now clothed with many an ancient flap and fold,
> And wrinkled like an apple kept till May,
> She weighs the interest money in her palm,
> And, when the Agent calls her valiant name,
> Hears, like the war whoops of her perished day,
> The lads playing snow-snake in the stinging cold.
> (*The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* 1926, 230)

Dagg reads the poem as a subtle critique by Scott on treaties, and another instance of the expression of his true inner feelings. "The dissatisfaction with treaties, largely acknowledged today as government swindles, is clearly seen in 'Watkwenies,' where the old woman weighs her 'interest money' knowing full well the principal can never be repaid" (Dagg, 190). In my view, Dagg's readings of the two poems as "anti-assimilationist" are so speculative as to be unsubstantiated by anything in the poem.

Other critics echo Dagg's contention of a private/public split in Scott, which then underscores the notion of Scott's two opposing sides of sensitive/superior. Scott's department of Indian Affairs work is defined as public, while Scott's literary work is defined as private. This division is problematic because a literary career also has a very public side, which Dagg does not seem to take into account. Scott's biographer, Robert L. McDougall similarly divides Scott's "inner life," expressed in his poetry, from his "outer life" in his role within the department of Indian Affairs (McDougall 1980, 135). Both critics are concerned with reading Scott's poetry as an expression of his attitudes toward Aboriginal peoples, and therefore of apprehending Scott the person through his writing.

Gordon Johnston (1980) links the doubleness of Scott to a differential view of

Aboriginal people as a whole in contrast to particular individuals who are typically the subjects of his "Indian poems." Johnston suggests that Scott

> had an irreconcilably double attitude towards [Aboriginal peoples] and confronted it constantly: the official, rational, structured approach which categorized and judged them, comprehended tensions and reduced everything to One answer (in their case, assimilation), and the other approach which experienced the people as individuals, personally, with sympathy and regret (Johnston 1980, 15).

In his study of non-Aboriginal representations of Aboriginal people, *The Imaginary Indian*, social critic Daniel Francis (1992) also remarks on the contradiction between Scott's implementing of policies of assimilation in his role in the department of Indian Affairs, and the portrayals of Aboriginal people in his poems. "Scott also wrote poems about Indians, poems which were highly regarded in his day for their sympathetic understanding of Indian character, poems which reveal another set of attitudes and project a different image of the Indian [than was expressed in his government writings and actions] (Francis 1992, 212).

The critic who has elaborated this ethical concern most fully is Stan Dragland (1992), in his book-length study focussed primarily on Scott's "Indian poems" titled *Floating Voice: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Literature of Treaty 9.* Dragland has taken the issue of what he and others see as Scott's double-attitude or two-sides, and elaborated on this doubleness as the central problematic in interpreting Scott's "life and work concerning First Nations people" (Dragland 1992, 19). Dragland notes the shift that has taken place in Scott studies. "For most of his life and for quite some time after he died, the fact that he was a civil servant who was actually competent was considered an interesting sidelight on the more significant literary career...The balance of interest, even

that of many literary people, has been shifting toward the record of the civil servant (Dragland 1992, 11). Examining the "record of Scott the civil servant" gives rise, for Dragland and others, to a dilemma that becomes the focus of Dragland's text: "the question that is always asked by those who read [Scott's] Indian poems in light of his administrative record is: how could the same man be responsible for both?" (Dragland 1992, 11). According to Dragland, the contrast between Scott's seemingly contradictory sides is "normally seen as an exercise in resolution: how to reconcile Scott's attractive and apparently humane poems and stories about Indians...with the dreadful legacy of his administration of Indian Affairs" (Dragland 1992, 5). Dragland's book makes a significant contribution to Scott studies because it attempts to grapple with the relationship between Scott's literary work and his government work and intends to read the former in light of the latter in a more extended way than has anyone else to date.

What is especially relevant about Dragland's study to my examination of literary criticism as a technology of remembrance is the ways in which, in my view, it fails in its stated intention to sustain a critique of colonisation and its inherent racist presumptions of white cultural superiority. One of the reasons for this failure is Dragland's investment in certain conventions of literary criticism that limit and constrain the remembrance of First Nations-Canadian relations that would be required in order to actually take seriously the violence and oppression at the heart of the colonial project in Canada. The central problem arises from Dragland's ascription to a view of the relative autonomy of the aesthetic text. The result is that even though he attempts to read literature through a historically informed lens, in the sense that I discussed in Chapter One, even a

decolonising narrative of history is ultimately displaced by an approach to "the poems as poems" (Dragland 1992, 7).

Dragland approaches something related to Said's articulation of the "worldliness" (Said 1984) of all texts, but maintains an autonomous space for literature which contradicts and undermines an analysis of the worldliness of Scott's work. Dragland tells us that *Floating Voice* "is about the struggle that must take place within anyone, like myself, who tries to recognize and write about poems and stories *both* as autonomous and as contaminated by their existence in the world, in history (1992, 6, emphasis in original). Said's theorising of the worldliness of all texts provides an alternative view. Said posits that all texts are "worldly" in that they are always affiliated with power; "even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (Said 1984, 3). As Said elaborates:

> The realities of power and authority — as well as the resistances offered by men, women, and social movements to institutions, authorities and orthodoxies — are the realities that makes texts possible, that deliver them to their readers, that solicit the attention of critics. I propose that these realities are what should be taken account of by criticism (Said 1984, 5).

Dragland's stated intention is to consider the ethics of the "surrounding circumstances, the contexts of composition" (7) of the poems. But the separateness between aesthetics and history he maintains leads him, as he puts it, to "find myself on both sides of this difficult issue, compelled to see double as I admire Scott's writing and despise so much of what made it possible" (8). Part of the reason why Dragland's analysis ends up being unable to confront or address the realities of power and authority that make

Scott's texts possible is that Dragland holds onto a view that the "literariness" of literature can be divided from ideological content. As Dragland puts it:

> It certainly is important to be alive to the difference between the verbal events that make literature literary and the ideological content that writers and writing may share with any sort of discourse, but conscience often makes it hard to know where to draw the line (1992, 8).

Eagleton (1983) takes a much different stance in his historical analysis of the rise of English as a discipline and the definition of literature we have inherited from the Romantic period. "To speak of literature and ideology as two separate phenomena which can be interrelated is...in one sense quite unnecessary. Literature, in the meaning of the word we have inherited, *is* an ideology. It has the most intimate relationship to questions of social power" (Eagleton, 22). The very process of defining which kinds of writing are "literature" and which are not involves the ascription of value. "Value is a transitive term: it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations, according to particular criteria and in the light of given purposes" (Eagleton, 11). Who gets to define value in a way that achieves public significance involves social relations of power. Employing the definition of literature that he does, Dragland is not able to address those relations of power in his evaluation of Scott as a person and as a poet.

The other major problem with the evaluative discourse of "pure poetry versus contaminated politics" is that its focus on determining Scott's "real attitudes" towards Aboriginal people tends to overlooks the ways in which, regardless of what he "really believed," Scott's published texts circulated in the public realm. Scott's poetry became intelligible through larger imperialist and nationalist discourses about culture, race and

Canadian identity, despite whatever personal attitude may or may have been "at the heart" of the representations.

Dragland is concerned with Scott's "real attitude" toward Aboriginal peoples as an ethical dilemma in evaluating the poems. Yet he concludes that this attitude is impossible to determine. Dragland explains that he has "looked everywhere in the records relating to Scott for evidence to clarify his relationship with Indians. I have found that the only true recorded meeting of the whole man with individual Natives takes place *in* those poems. His job at Indian Affairs was just that, a job and not a vocation" (Dragland 1992, 14). In the end, it seems to me that this is how Dragland reconciles the "two sides" of Scott. The record of Scott's government writings and actions is explainable as what he did at work. Dragland disagrees with historian Brian Titely's assessment of Scott's attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples and cultures as being clearly evident and consistently expressed (Titely 1986). "If Scott had been nothing but an administrator, Titely's negative characterisation of him as a cold, penny pinching bureacrat might be quite accurate. But bureaucrat was an identity he assumed at the office" (Dragland 1992, 103). Here again we see that a concern with Scott's identity is paramount to Dragland's study. In this way he differs from Titely who assesses Scott's role in the department of Indian Affairs as an historical actor — what he did and what impact his actions had on historical developments. Dragland writes "Titely's view is more than tempting; it is irrefutable. And yet there is something missing from the book. It lacks a sense of Scott as a warm-blooded, multidimensional human being" (1992, 9).

Despite Dragland's assertions about Scott's split identity, the conceptual

framework of his study of Scott's "Indian poems" is a consideration of the textuality of identity and therefore its indeterminacy. His central metaphor is that of masks of identity; masks which are "the created or constructed personae that mediate every text" (Dragland 1992, 46). Within this frame, Scott's identity so far as his attitudes toward Aboriginal people are concerned, is indeterminate.

> When all of Scott's words and all the words that have been written about him have been analyzed in terms of their rhetorical packaging, their style, the occasion of their writing...their authority has a curious tendency to dissipate. If there is no Scott to be found, if there are only masks, then there can be no certainty regarding his attitude toward Native people...Mine is the first examination of Scott that substitutes a fluid and indeterminate textual personality for a "real" person (1992, 14).

At times, however, Dragland does define what he reads as Scott's attitude toward Aboriginal people. There are some contradictions to the conclusions he comes to as he wrestles with his conception of the two sides of Scott. This occurs, for example, in his examination of Scott's essay about his Treaty 9 northern expedition, "The Last of the Indian Treaties" (Dragland 1992, 62-64). Dragland writes "There would probably be little debate about Scott's opinion of Indians if 'The Last of the Indian Treaties,' so apparently warm and compassionate, were the only prose text we had to go on" (Dragland 1992, 62). The interpretation of Scott's "opinion of Indians" as "warm and compassionate" is contradictory given that Dragland states that he intends to take seriously "the issue of racism" (8) and the "habit of cultural superiority" (106-126) in the Canadian colonial project. He does acknowledge that even the individuals portrayed in the essay towards whom Scott is "warm and affectionate" are "nevertheless patronized.

They are not equals" (62). For example, Scott's article contains a description of a Cree man named Charles Wabinoo, which Dragland notes is "meant to be very attractive" but is patronizing. Just as Scott and his treaty party are packing up their trunk of annuity money in small bills, Charles Wabinoo arrives.

> He did not ask for anything, he stood, smiling slightly. He seemed about twenty years of age, with a face of great beauty and intelligence, and eyes that were wild with a sort of surprise — shy at his novel position and proud that he was of some importance. His named was Charles Wabinoo. We found it on the list and gave him his eight dollars. When he felt the new crisp notes he took a crucifix from his breast, kissed it swiftly, and made a fugitive sign of the cross. "From my heart I thank you," he said. There was the Indian at the best point of a transitional state, still wild as a lynx, with all the lore and instinct of his race undimmed, and possessed wholly by the simplest rule of the Christian life, as yet unspoiled by the arts of sly lying, paltry cunning, and the lower vices which come from contact with such of our debased manners and customs as come to him in the wilderness (1992, 122).

Dragland notes that "Scott's portrait of Charles Wabinoo has a misleading toughness about it. White people are seen as corrupters of Indians, but they are also implicitly regarded as sole shapers of the Indian future, as if the Indians had little of cultural significance to contribute to their own evolving identity" (52). Yet, despite this, Dragland still says "there is nothing overt about white superiority in 'The Last of the Indian Treaties'" (1992, 54). For Dragland, superiority is reduced to an infusion of an observational perspective "established as being more sophisticated than the people he writes about" (54). This evaluation seems to contradict Dragland's stated intention not to be an "apologist" for Scott (1992, 9).

Dragland makes an important point about "The Last of The Indian Treaties." He suggests that the opinions expressed be divided into two categories "the Indian in

general" and of "Native individuals." In other words, Scott expresses a general view towards "the Indians" as a people and finds certain individual exceptions among the group as a whole. Here Dragland echoes Gordon Johnston's reading of the "double attitude" he identifies in Scott, whereby Scott is seen to embody a "rational approach" to governance and an emotional approach including "sympathy and regret" in his poems (Johnston 1980, 15). Dragland finds that Scott "appears to feel that 'the Indian' [as a group identity] has scarcely emerged from a North American version of the Dark Ages; [the Indian] is ignorant and innocent and vulnerable to calculating, worldly whites" (Dragland 1994, 62). I would add that the "Indians in general" are presented in a discourse of the primitive Other; as simple, uncomprehending, superstitious, cruel, and dirty. For example, the ideology of Aboriginal peoples as simple and uncomprehending is expressed in the following passage about the treaty process:

> To individuals whose transactions have been heretofore limited to computation with sticks and skins our errand must indeed have been dark. They were to make certain promises and we were to make certain promises but our purpose and our reasons were alike unknowable. What could they grasp of the pronouncement on the Indian tenure which had been delivered by the law lords of the Crown, what of the elaborate negotiations between a dominion and a province which had made the treaty possible, and what of the sense of traditional policy which brooded over the whole? Nothing. So there was no basis for argument. The simpler facts had to be stated, and the parental idea developed that the King is the great father of the Indians, watchful over their interests, and ever compassionate (Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties" in *Circle of Affection* 1947, 115).

Rather than asking how can the two disparate sides of Scott can co-exist in one person, I want to ask: what are the conditions that make it possible for both elements to coexist? My reading is that there are not two distinct and opposing sides expressed in

Scott's texts. The images and knowledge construction that circulate through both of the "two sides" are linked through discursive forms which share a remembrance/pedagogy of colonisation of First Nations peoples as either unspoken/denied, or normalised and justified, or nostalgic.

### ii) Imperialist Nostalgia & The Vanishing Race

In this section, I suggest a fourth evaluative discourse through which to read Scott's "Indian poems," one that draws on a counter-hegemonic reading of history in its approach to the poetic text. This critical practice has not been applied to Scott's work to date. I also touch briefly on some of my own readings of Scott's work. One of the conditions that allows "both sides" of Scott to co-exist is a discourse that critical anthropologist Renato Rosaldo has termed "imperialist nostalgia." Imperialist nostalgia engages in mourning that which one is helping to destroy. The elegiac quality of mourning in Scott's poems is noted by critics. For example, Daniel Francis points out that "while in his official capacity he promoted the destruction of Native culture, as a poet [Scott] chose often to lament it" (Francis 1992, 212).

> In a general way, Scott's poems depict the reduction of the Indian from warrior to ward of the state. They are filled with images of savagery, stoicism and death... But Scott's poems also convey a kind of lurid respect for the Indians, for their wild independence, their dignity, their 'savage past.' Scenes of death and destruction are filled with melancholy" (Francis, 212).

Similarly, Dragland claims Scott "regretted what was happening to his charges" (Dragland 1974, 179). As Rosaldo articulates, imperialist nostalgia, such as that expressed by Scott, and by some of his critics, produces an innocent distance from how

and why cultural transformation is happening and what part the government agent, in this case, plays in "scenes of death and destruction." Rosaldo writes:

> Curiously enough, agents of colonialism — officials, constabulary officers, missionaries and other figures from whom anthropologists ritually dissociate themselves — often display nostalgia for the colonised culture as it was "traditionally" (that is when they first encountered it). The peculiarity of their yearning, of course, is that agents of colonialism long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed...[this is] a particular kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed (Rosaldo, 69).

The proliferation of the discourse of "the vanishing Indian" in Scott's poetry (and prose) can be read as a nostalgic lament for the loss of people and ways of life which Scott was simultaneously involved in undermining through the policies of the Canadian state. The lament is then interpreted by critics as evidence of Scott's sensitivity to "the plight of the Indian." An example in Scott's poetry of the vanishing race motif is found in the poem "Indian Place Names."

> The race has waned and left but tales of ghosts
> That hover in the world like fading smoke
> About the lodges: gone are the dusky folk
> That once were cunning with the throng and snare
> And mighty with the paddle and the bow
> ...
> But now their vaunted prowess all is gone,
> Gone like a moose track in the April snow.
> (*Poems of DC Scott* 1926, 22)

The sheer accretion of words like "fading," "waned," and especially, "gone," begin to read like more of a celebration of the passing or a sense of satisfaction than a lament. What remains after "the race has waned," the poem says, are Indian place names, which

are then recited in the poem in a way that calls attention to their poetic rhythms, tones and beauty: "They flow like water, or like wind they flow." This poem is not often discussed in the literary criticism I have examined in this paper, but I think it is an important poem to read in light of imperialist nostalgia. The poet celebrates the aesthetic qualities of Aboriginal language. Scott's appreciation of certain elements of Aboriginal culture seems to be translated in Scott literary criticism generally into consolation for cultural destruction and political oppression. In "The Last of the Indian Treaties" (Scott 1947), again the theme of the "vanishing race" appears. Scott writes, "The Indian nature now seems like a fire that is waning, that is smouldering and dying away in ashes" (Scott 1947, 110). But this is hardly a lament, given that Scott immediately precedes this statement with the claim that "in the early days the Indians were a real menace to the colonization of Canada...a concerted movement upon the new settlements would have obliterated them as easily as a child wipes pictures from his slate" (Ibid, 109). Before the time when "the Indian nature" began to wane "it was ready to break out at any moment in savage dances, in wild and desperate orgies in which ancient superstitions were involved with European ideas but dimly understood and intensified by cunning imagination inflamed with rum" (110).

One of the chief effects of imperialist nostalgia for colonial agents, Rosaldo argues, is the creation of a "mask of innocence to cover their involvement with the processes of domination" (Rosaldo, 86). This is salient to the conception of Scott's literary reputation as a poet who created sensitive portrayals of "the plight of the Indian" and the "vanishing race." Importantly, imperialist nostalgia "occurs alongside a peculiar

sense of mission, 'the white man's burden,' where civilized nations stand duty-bound to uplift the so-called savage ones" (Rosaldo, 70). The ideology of the "white man's burden" also lends an aura of innocence to the cultural transformation — through destruction — that takes place under imperialism. If one or one's country is duty-bound in the discourse of progress to uplift the so-called savage then there is an inevitability to the changes that one may be lamenting. That which is inevitable is unavoidable and therefore nothing needs to be done in response, or nothing different at any rate.

One of the examples Francis (1992) gives to illustrate his claim that Scott's poems display a "lurid respect" for Aboriginal peoples and culture is the poem "The Onondaga Madonna" which I included in Chapter One. Virtually every line in the poem is a recognisable stereotype and overall is a catalogue of dehumanising characteristics attributed to Aboriginal people by a Eurocentric discourse of the "savage Other," what Goldberg has termed the conceptual order of the primitive (Goldberg 1994, 155).

> She stands full throated and with a careless pose,
> This woman of a weird and waning race,
> The tragic savage lurking in her face,
> Where all her pagan passion burns and glows;
> Her blood is mingled with war and wildness in her viens;
> Her rebel lips dabbled with the stains
> Of feuds and forays and her father's woes.
> (*Poems of DC Scott*, 230).

Shohat and Stam articulate a significant connection between cultural representations that depict the vanished or vanishing Indian and political relations between the state and present-day First Nations. "The elimination of the Indian allows for elegiac nostalgia as a way to treat Indians only in the past tense and thus dismiss the

claims in the present, while posthumously expressing thanatological tenderness for their memory (Shohat & Stam 1994 , 118). As Indian Affairs deputy superintendent, Scott certainly had to deal with "claims in the present" of a new generation of First Nations leaders who had gained knowledge of the workings of Euro-Canadian institutions and "were prepared to employ the white man's own political and legal system" (Titely 1986, 94) to defend their land and sovereignty claims. Scott worked diligently to dismiss and undermine those claims, as I discussed in Chapter One (see Titely 1986, especially chapters 5 and 6).

Another issue Scott is credited with being sensitive to has to do with the "tragic half-breed" caught between two cultures and in an anguished psychological state. As E.K. Brown puts it in a discussion of "The Onondaga Madonna," "here the theme is the tragic confusion of the *métis*, and nowhere in his work does Scott show a more delicate imaginative sympathy than in his dealings with those of mixed blood" (Brown 1943, 83). However, the "delicate imaginative sympathy" attributed to Scott in poems such as "The Onondaga Madonna" and "The Half-breed Girl" is more accurately viewed as a racialized and Eurocentric discourse about racial mixing and the supposed tragedy of cultural miscegenation. Brown illustrates my point when he writes about the "The Onondaga Madonna," "here what shines out from the quiet lines is not the specific tragedy of a European-Indian mixtures, but the general tragedy of all blood-mixture" ( Brown 1943, 84).

A.J.M. Smith (1948) is another critic who discusses Scott's sensitive portrayals in terms of the "tragedy" of racial mixing between Aboriginal and white Canadian culture.

He notes that "a theme that has touched the poet's imagination deeply" is "the conflict between two cultures, the red man's and the white's, in the divided heart of the Indian or the half breed" (Smith 1948, 110). In her analysis of the concepts of blood, race and miscegenation in Scott's writing, Lisa Salem (1993) finds that Scott "was able to write sympathetically of the pain experienced by individuals of mixed blood" even though ultimately "Scott believed that civilization was necessary and that intermarriage was a crucial part of the civilization process" (Salem 1993, 109). The sensitivity that literary critics have attributed to Scott's "Indian poems" can be more accurately read as an instance of imperialist nostalgia.

### iii) The "Two Sides" Question & The Settler Subject

In "Post Colonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject," Alan Lawson provides a very interesting analysis of what he terms the "liminal site" of settler cultures, such as Canada, which are located, he argues, at the point of negotiation between the contending authorities of Empire and Native" (Lawson 1995, 24). Settler subjects in what he strategically calls the Second World are suspended between "mother" and "other," simultaneously colonized and colonizing (24). He uses the term "Second World" as a strategy to draw attention to the bifocality, bivocality and doubleness and duplicity of the "in between" condition of subjects in the settler colonies.

Lawson draws on Bhabha's observation that "the colonial text occupies that space of double inscription" in a particular way within the frame of the Second World to refer to "the endlessly problematic double inscription within the Second World subject of

authority and authenticity" (Lawson, 25). The settler subject in the Second world is "caught between two First Worlds, two origins of authority and authenticity: the originating world of Europe, the imperium, as source of the Second World's principal cultural authority; and that other First World, that of the First Nations, whose authority the settlers not only effaced and replaced but desired ( 29). In the settler postcolonial situation, the address of the settler is toward both the absent(ee) cultural authority of the imperium and the effaced, recessive cultural authority of the First Nations (29).

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin elaborate on the condition of ambivalence for the settler subject that arises from occupying the space of double inscription and being caught between two origins of authority and authenticity. They observe that

> at the heart of the settler colony culture is also am ambivalent attitude towards their own identity, poised as they are between the centre from which they seek to differentiate themselves and the indigenous people who serve to remind them of their own problematic occupation of the country (Ashcroft et al 1995, 152).

Lawson's discussion of the doubleness of the invader-settler position with regards to authenticity and authority provides a useful framework through which to counter the construction of the memory of Scott as a double and contradictory person with respect to his views toward Aboriginal peoples. Lawson's analysis suggests a fifth evaluative discourse that can be employed in reading Scott's work. This is the last critical practice I will discuss. In relation to the prior presence of the First Nations, the settler situation involves what Lawson terms a "tripled dream": *effacement* of indigenous authority, *appropriation* of indigenous authenticity, and *inheritance* of indigenous spiritual 'rites' to the land (26). In his capacities as Indian Affairs bureaucrat and as "poet of the

Confederation," Scott can be seen to working on all three of the settler dreams that Lawson sets out. The tripled dream of effacement of indigenous authority, appropriation of indigenous authenticity, and inheritance of indigenous spiritual "rites" to the land is an integrated dream, all of its components work together on the ground of the settler desire to claim Canada as cultural home.

On both of his "two sides" as administrator and as poet, Scott can be seen as playing a significant role in all three components of the settler dream We have seen that through the power of his role in the Canadian government, Scott worked actively to efface indigenous authority. Administering the laws and policies of the Indian Act, with its highly invasive presence in First Nations communities through Indian Agents, law enforcement officials and dictated policies about Aboriginal cultural practices, religion, economic activities, financial resources, education and political structures, Scott played a key role in effacing Aboriginal authority. For example, as I discussed in Chapter One, Scott introduced an amendment to the Indian Act that forbid First Nations communities from hiring lawyers to work on their behalf in cases that challenged the government. Another example is Scott's role in increasing the stringency of Indian Act laws that forced Aboriginal parents to send their children to school or risk arrest and imprisonment. As a powerful bureaucrat in the department of Indian Affairs, Scott participated in the signing of Treaty 9 into law which effected the inheritance of a huge land mass to the Canadian government and the non-Aboriginal citizens it represented. The claims to and enforcement by the Canadian government of what Dyck terms a "coercive tutelage" toward First Nations peoples embodies an appropriation of indigenous authenticity, in

that it overrides the authenticity of First Nations political and cultural sovereignty which being original inhabitants of a country should guarantee.

Scott also engaged in effacement of indigenous authority through his literary writing and through the ways in which his writing was received and interpreted in criticism. The ways in which Scott's "Indian poems" have been located in criticism as authentic sources of knowledge about Aboriginal people, cultures and Aboriginal-Canadian history exemplify effacement of Aboriginal authority over self-representation. Scott's voice has been granted an authority by critics which, until relatively recently, was not seriously challenged by the publicly recognised presence of Aboriginal writers, speakers and scholars. Scott's poetic voice was granted an authenticity that served to erase and replace Aboriginal voices and perspectives.

Lawson's articulation of the settler subject as "caught between two First Worlds, two origins of authority and authenticity: the originating world of Europe, the imperium, as source of the Second World's principal cultural authority; and that other First World, that of the First Nations" ( 29) opens up new conceptual space for reading Scott literary criticism. It has been much more common to address the cultural authority of the "mother" than the "other." The second, contending source of authority discussed in Canadian literary criticism (after the mother, that is, England) is usually the United States, not the First Nations. The "originating world" of the First Nations is implicitly addressed in Canadian literature and in popular Canadian cultural iconography on a frequent basis however. Among the iconic images of the Mountie, the Canadian flag, and landscape images, the ubiquitous images of an "Indian Chief" in ceremonial headgear is

not only an anonymous stereotype. The image is one of the references that circulate in the culture that recognizes the prior presence of First Nations people. Settler cultural anxiety about the two origins of authority and authenticity intersects with the tripled dream. Reading Scott literary criticism through a counter-hegemonic narrative of colonial history highlights the ways in which Lawson's theory of the tripled settler dream further breaks down what I am saying is the false conception of the two sides of Scott. Scott's poetry read in relation to his government career actually encapsulates the processes which are interdependent in imperialism in the settler colony situation.

### iv) Conclusion

Why remember Scott? If history is something that requires answerability, implication — not transcendence (Britzman 1998) — and I think it is — then Scott is part of a legacy with which all of us situated here on this land, from our different locations, must grapple with. The effects of the policies he administered and helped to shape are still with us. Aboriginal people are still suffering the consequences of those policies, as historian Winona Stevenson points out (in Cullingham 1995). And, from different social locations of privilege, non-Aboriginal people are still enjoying the benefits of land and resource acquisition and exploitation. How and on what terms we might remember Duncan Campbell Scott becomes part of the larger story and impact of colonialism and imperialism and how we differently understand our responsibility and accountability to the reality of that story.

Because Canada began as an invader-settler colony any discussion of national origins, history and identity has to either address or suppress or rewrite the fact of colonial invasion, conquest and settlement by Europeans of a land already inhabited by First Nations peoples. Moreover, the impact of this history and questions of justice and First Nations self-determination continues. For example, there are currently more than 80 self-government negotiations between First Nations and Canadian government going on across the country. In B.C. alone, there are more than 50 aboriginal land claims underway (Toronto Star, Dec 5/98, B4). The colonialist imposition by European, and later Euro-Canadian governments, of foreign law, culture, and language in a paternalistic relationship has been termed "coercive tutelage" — defined as an "arbitrary restraint or guardianship exercised by one party over another" (Dyck 1991 , 3). The appropriation, exploitation and occupation of Aboriginal land continues today.

In this project, I have begun to conceptualize literary criticism as a technology of remembrance. Through reading the literary readings of Duncan Campbell Scott that range over a number of decades, my intention has been to illustrate some of the ways in which literary criticism is both constitutive of and constituted by public memory in Canada. In particular, remembrances of First Nations-Canadian relations as they have been formed historically through the power relations of colonialism and its attendant racialized discourses can be seen to be produced and reproduced within Scott literary criticism. My central question in this project asks what kinds of learnings are instantiated about the violent colonial history of Canada in the remembrances of Scott. My concern has been to examine what the readings of Scott's poetry remember and forget about the broader

historical context of First Nations-Canadian relations. I have identified three prevalent evaluative discourses in Scott criticism which I have critiqued from the perspective of what they erase. Additionally, I have suggested two alternative evaluative discourses through which to read Scott's work which are grounded in a counter-hegemonic view of history.

While considerable attention has been paid to the role of literature in the formation of national identities and the nurturing of the imagination of empire, the role of literary criticism has been relatively overlooked in the same regard. Yet it is in the space of literary criticism that such conceptualizations and debates about narrations of nation and empire have been taking place. I am positing that criticism is a significant part of the discursive relations of national identities and memories. As my discussion of the critical practices of "the ring of absolute truth," "universal symbols of man," and "pure poetry versus contaminated politics" intends to illustrate, the discrete discursive regimes of literary criticism can serve to authorize ideological formations and other forms of knowledge affiliated with domination.

Reading Scott's so-called "Indian poems" in relation to his role in Canadian policy on First Nations peoples raises the complex question of how to conceptualize the relationship between history and literature. I have suggested that history needs to come before literature in the sense that traumatic histories of oppression be put before criticism as a call to response and responsibility. In my project, this is particularly relevant to readings of Scott as a nationalist poet of a settler country founded through conquest of Aboriginal peoples. I am taking a position in this project on the necessity of approaching

Canadian literature and Canadian literary criticism from a counter-hegemonic view of history. My position underlies the two additional approaches I discussed in Chapter Four. This is important because the hegemonic view of Canadian history is one of denial and forgetting and thus poses one of the barriers to present and urgent questions of justice for First Nations peoples.

I have argued that it is important to attend to the ways in which literature is read in the institutionalized cultural practices of literary criticism. I have been calling attention to the need to attend to the reading formations that organize the way Canadian writers are read. My reading of the literary readings of Duncan Campbell Scott is located within a larger discourse of the problematics of collective remembrance of traumatic histories. Remembering the fact of trauma of invasion, conquest and coercive tutelage can create a radically different "structure of attitude and reference toward imperialism" in literary criticism. As well, I have drawn from and attempted to produce an analysis of the legacy of colonial relations in Canada grounded in a view of First Nations-Canadian relations *as* a relationship. This is consciously differentiated from the politics of examining "the Aboriginal question" with its pathologizing and objectifying perspective.

There are a number of directions in which this project could be developed. One of the further developments of this project could be to explore discussions that have been taking place around historiography, textuality and literature, and to locate Scott criticism within those debates. Another would be to consider the critical reception of literary works by Scott's contemporaries in terms of representations of Aboriginal peoples and the role of those images in narrations of Canadian self-identity.

Finally, what this thesis begins to open up is the complex question of how to discuss the evocative power of poetic language in relation to imperialist forms of culture. It is not my intention to reduce Scott's poems merely to historicization, but rather to ask what an ethical reading of Scott would look like in view of a counter-hegemonic narration of Canadian history. The thesis is not an attempt to solve the problems of the evocative power of literature and its implications in structures of imperialism. However, it does lay some of the groundwork, I hope, upon which to move to a next step in the development of issues raised in the readings of the readings of Scott. The next stage could be to consider the problem of how each of us as readers of Scott's poetry might hold ourselves accountable to the double legacy of the pleasure of the poetic text and the imperialist structures in which it they are set. Beyond the imperialist frames I have discussed, what else might be important to confront in a reading of Scott? One area would include exploring forms of desire and identifications mobilized in the dynamics between readers and texts, and to consider specifically how such dynamics may have been at work in readings to date of Scott's "Indian poems."

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