KILLING THE BEAST:

ANIMAL DEATH IN CANADIAN LITERATURE, HUNTING, PHOTOGRAPHY, TAXIDERMY, AND SLAUGHTERHOUSES, 1865-1920

by

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Abstract: Killing the Beast: Animal Death in Canadian Literature, Hunting, Photography, Taxidermy, and Slaughterhouses, 1865-1920

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This dissertation explores the ways in which practices of killing animals in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada shaped humans’ perceptions of self and place. Analyzing the multivalent meanings of animal death in wild animal stories, sport hunting, photography, taxidermy, and meat eating, I argue that killing animals was integral to the expansion of settler colonialism in the dominion, materially facilitating the extension of agriculture and industry, and rhetorically legitimizing claims to conquest over indigenous peoples and wild landscapes.

But humans’ self-definitions through animal death were not straightforward tales of mastery. Increasingly aware of the disappearance of wildlife from the dominion’s forests, less dependent upon wildlife for subsistence, women and men attributed greater cultural, political, and economic value to the nation’s animals, empathizing with animals and condemning animal extinction. Expressing a sense of guilt over human culpability in the vanishing of wild species, then, humans sought ways of defeating the ravages of modernity by preserving traces of animals in material, representational forms, using encounters with animals as means of defining a sense of self and nation. Fictional stories of animals proliferated, sport hunting soared in popularity, and taxidermied animals adorned many walls. Contemporaries killed animals as a means of legitimizing colonial occupation of newly settled land and asserting mastery over nature, then, but they also regretted their role in precipitating the disappearance of animals from nature. In reconciling this paradox, human and animal engaged in an ongoing process of co-
constitution, defining and redefining shifting boundaries of kinship and otherness in a myriad of ways.

Such paradoxical meanings of animal death emerged when humans were no longer reliant upon wild animals for survival. As such, I conclude this study by analyzing an important counterpart to wild animal death—the slaughtering of domestic animals as meat. Eating commercially produced meat increasingly defined one’s status as a modern subject within a technologically advanced and civilized nation, the transition from eating wild animals to domestic animals symbolizing a sense of success in overcoming the challenges of settlement in a colonial landscape.
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Introduction

*With Gun & Rod in Canada*, a text published in the early twentieth century by Canadian hunter, guide, and magazine editor Phil Moore, contained a variety of stories, poems, reflections, and reminiscences of the author’s lifetime spent killing animals in Canadian forests. Moore told tales of stalking and killing ferocious moose near Hudson’s Bay, outwitting grizzly bears in the Rocky Mountains, and trapping black bears in Nova Scotia. Recalling the many inept urban sportsmen and foreign travellers he had encountered, Moore also ridiculed his contemporaries’ alleged ignorance of animals and mistreatment of guides. In a chapter entitled “Wild Editors I Have Known,” an obvious parody of Canadian nature writer Ernest Thompson Seton’s famous collection of animal stories *Wild Animals I Have Known*, the sportsman also derided his colleagues, editors of hunting and fishing magazines in North America, who, he claimed, had not the slightest idea how to use rod or gun in the wilderness, whose knowledge of wild animals derived from books and photographs and not from authentic encounters with animal death.

Alongside his stories of killing ferocious beasts—tales that were exercises in self-definition, that constituted the hunter as virile conqueror of animal and nature—Moore included one particularly intriguing chapter entitled “The Grizzly Agrees” in which he spoke through a grizzly narrator, chastising sport hunting from the perspective of the animal. In a parodic reversal of nineteenth century naturalists’ desires to know and to study the ways of animals, the grizzly claimed to have intimate knowledge of human
hunters, having encountered them in the Rocky Mountain forests and having himself lived as the human editor of a sporting magazine in an earlier life. Taunting human beings as “mushy and weak,” the bear lamented humans’ cruel use of modern technologies such as guns to kill his fellow animal creatures and argued that humans ought not be allowed to hunt nor use guns.¹

Moore narrated his life through stories of animal death. The tales contained in *With Gun & Rod in Canada* point to the deeply paradoxical ways in which Canadians encountered animals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and indicate how concerns over broader cultural, political, and economic changes mediated relations between human and animal. Moore espoused an antimodernist critique of urban men who lacked experience killing animals and proudly asserted his own virility and skills in hunting, but he also emotionally and sympathetically identified with vanishing wildlife and regretted ongoing processes of animal extinction. The author promoted a kind of nationalistic pride in Canada’s distinctive landscape as a site productive of northern vigour and hardiness, yet he also appealed to a more transnational community of elite sportsmen, indicating the ways in which killing animals allowed bonds of class and race to transcend national borders. Finally, Moore criticized the intrusion of urban-industrial modernity into Canada’s forests, but his own text encouraged the capitalist consumption of these same spaces through his endorsement of wilderness tourism and in his fetishization of animal bodies as trophies. Highlighting the crucial ways in which animals defined his sense of self, his sense of place, and his sense of nation and empire, then, *With Gun & Rod in Canada* points to the entanglement of animal death with urban-

industrial modernity, colonialism and race, gender and masculinity, and ontological ways of knowing the world more broadly.

“Killing the Beast: Animal Death in Canadian Literature, Hunting, Photography, Taxidermy, and Slaughterhouses, 1865-1920” explores the ways in which practices of killing animals in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada shaped humans’ perceptions of self and place. Analyzing the multivalent meanings of animal death in wild animal stories, big game hunting, photography, taxidermy, and meat eating, I argue that killing animals facilitated English Canadians’ definitions as settler-colonizers of a wild northern landscape and helped them to position Canada as a British colony, as a legitimate nation and, indeed, as an emerging empire in its own right. Animal death was integral to the expansion of settler colonialism in the dominion, physically facilitating the extension of rural agriculture and urban industry, and rhetorically legitimizing claims to mastery and conquest over indigenous peoples and wild landscapes. By looking at the period between 1865, when prominent hunting narratives and photographs of animals began to appear, and 1920, when bureaucratic systems of animal management began to expand, I suggest that humans’ effort to assert dominance over animals stemmed from a modernist project of mastery and separation, an effort to divide human from animal, and higher beings from lesser beings. Discourse based on species was used to produce a host of various other subjects structured by race, gender, and class.

But post-Confederation efforts to define self and nation through animal death were not simple, straightforward tales of mastery and conquest. Contemporary men and women were increasingly aware of the disappearance of wildlife from the dominion’s forests in the face of urban-industrial and agricultural expansion and, in their desire for
authentic encounters with wild animals, they empathized with dying animals as kin and condemned animal extinction. I argue that humans reconciled their desire for both dominance and kinship through a variety of beliefs and practices that legitimized killing, showing how this process defined and redefined the boundary between human and animal in myriad ways as humans made the animals they killed and were themselves made through such encounters.

Victorians were fascinated with animals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As wild animal populations declined in numbers, contemporary women and men became less dependent upon wildlife as utilitarian sources of flesh and fur necessary for subsistence, and attributed greater cultural, political, and economic value to the nation’s animals as emblems of natural wealth, and killing wildlife became an activity of leisured consumption rather than one of subsistence production. Both reflective and productive of broader social changes, animal death adopted a host of new cultural and political meanings in a rapidly modernizing nation. As urbanization, industrialization, and the growth of capitalism more broadly offered increased opportunities for leisure and consumption, the expansion of European empires facilitated imperial desires to conquer, collect, and catalogue the plants, animals, and peoples of the world. At the same time, emerging scientific theories regarding the relationship between humans and animals, particularly Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection, presented new evidence for human-animal kinship. Feeling alienated from nature and insecure of their place within the world, Canadians used encounters with wild animals as a means of defining a sense of self and a sense of place.² Fictional stories of animals proliferated,

² Scholars have recently placed increased emphasis on the ways in which historical definitions of what it means to be human have long depended upon encounters with animals. See Jodey Castricano, ed., Animal
big game hunting soared in popularity, and taxidermied animals adorned the walls of private homes and public institutions as contemporary men and women sought new and meaningful ways of engaging with nonhuman others.

**Killing Animals in Canada: History and Historiography**

Killing animals has been integral to Canadian history. Founded upon the commercial exploitation of fish and fur-bearing animals, Canada’s existence as a colony and as a nation depended on animal death. European settlers relied on First Nations peoples’ knowledge of hunting and trapping and became integrated into indigenous networks of subsistence and exchange that revolved around killing animals. In a colonial frontier home to relatively abundant wild animal populations and low levels of urban-industrial development, subsistence hunting was crucial to survival, and the circulation of dead animal bodies linked First Nations men and women, settler colonists, and metropolitan economies. Even after the decline of the fur trade, well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Canadian settlers relied on indigenous hunters for food.³ With the expansion of settlement and the agricultural frontier, however, practices of killing animals in Canada changed. Domestically raised livestock became easier to purchase, which, alongside increased time for leisure, transformed hunting from an act of

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subsistence to one of recreation. The very forces of modernization that placed increased value on wildlife contributed to its demise, causing individuals, organizations, and governments in post-Confederation Canada to devote greater attention and resources to the cause of conservation. The protection of wildlife became a popular subject of public debate, as humans contemplated the best means of managing animal populations to ensure the continued availability of wild animals for human use.

Canadian historians have recently begun to investigate various subthemes within this broad narrative of human-animal encounter in greater detail. Greg Gillespie’s *Hunting for Empire: Narratives of Sport in Rupert’s Land, 1840-1870*, for instance, examines the cultural values and worldviews of elite British big game hunters who travelled to what would become Western Canada in the mid-nineteenth century in search of foreign animals to kill. Attracted to the remote parts of British North America then controlled by the Hudson’s Bay Company by a desire for adventure and danger, Gillespie argues, these hunters interpreted the Canadian landscape in ways that rendered its unfamiliarity and strange exoticism accessible and knowable, reinterpreting the wilderness of Rupert’s Land through British cultural lenses. Other historians have examined the hunting practices of settlers and indigenous peoples in the years leading up to Confederation, investigating the ways in which hunting mediated cultural and economic exchanges between First Nations, fur traders, and colonists. Elizabeth Vibert has argued that early nineteenth century British employees of the Hudson’s Bay Company admired indigenous hunters’ bravery and courage, perceiving First Nations peoples’ skills in killing buffalo as emblematic of virility and masculinity. David

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Calverley has suggested that indigenous-settler relations during the early years of settlement in Upper Canada depended upon the exchange of dead animals, pointing out that colonial governments remained uninterested in regulating hunting until the later years of the nineteenth century, when the rise of wilderness tourism and sport hunting rendered wildlife politically and economically valuable. George Colpitts has also studied the changing meanings of wildlife in Western Canada, showing how settlers perceived animals in a variety of ways—as obstacles to agricultural expansion, as emblems of superabundance and natural wealth, as beings to be exploited, or, conversely, as creatures deserving to be protected.

As the observations of Vibert, Calverley, Gillespie, and Colpitts suggest, over the course of the nineteenth century, as agricultural settlement and urban-industrial growth escalated, wild animals were valued more for their symbolism as emblems of natural resource wealth, tourism, and leisure, and less for their subsistence or utilitarian value. Jean Manore and Tina Loo have explored the ways in which changing valorizations of wildlife stimulated debates over natural resource management, emphasizing how various approaches to conservation exposed deep cultural, economic, and political divisions between different groups of Canadians. In her study of hunting and the formation of Algonquin Park, Manore argues that access to wild animals pits southern, urban, recreational sport hunters, Euro-Canadian in origin, against rural northern hunters, both settler and indigenous, noting that the creation of the park marginalized those who

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5 Elizabeth Vibert, “Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race, and Class in British Fur Traders’ Narratives,” *Gender & History* 8 no. 1 (1996): 14; Calverley, “‘When the Need for it No longer Existed,’” 107. As Vibert and Calverley note, elite sportsmen and provincial governments sought legislation to restrict popular access to hunting; although early settlers were dependent upon indigenous peoples for access to animal resources, agricultural expansion and competition for wildlife refigured the First Nations hunter into “wasteful brute.”

depended on hunting for subsistence purposes and favoured those who killed wildlife for leisure. In States of Nature: Conserving Canada’s Wildlife in the Twentieth Century Loo suggests that, while the state gained increased control over wildlife management throughout the course of the twentieth century, local individuals retained influence over issues of conservation. But although Canadian settlers may have shaped conservation policies, First Nations hunters oftentimes suffered from growing restrictions on their access to game animals.

This dissertation builds upon these studies of hunting by identifying how the meanings of animal death transcended the act of hunting itself. I examine the circulation of dead animal bodies in spaces far removed from the forest, as wild animals entered the world of humans, analyzing the functions of anthropomorphism and pointing out how discourse on species informed the production of other exclusions. In identifying the ways in which animal death produced a variety of possible subject locations and social relations amongst peoples residing in turn-of-the-century Canada, I trace how broader discourses of colonialism, gender, class, race, and science stemmed in important ways from human encounters with animals, how the negotiation of species entailed the production of self and other. I argue that Canadian men and women did not simply construct animals as symbols of anthropocentric concerns but that animals, particularly in their deaths, comprised an integral feature of post-Confederation efforts at nation-building and empire-building.

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More specifically, I emphasize how animal death contributed to the production of many diverse characterizations of place in turn-of-the-century Canada. Canada was, in part, produced in a broad, international context, through the transnational circulation of sportsmen, animals, knowledge, and material objects. The culture of big game hunting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries promoted an exclusive, imperialist community of sportsmen whose membership transcended national boundaries. The desire to hunt and kill animals motivated big game hunters to travel across international borders in search of trophies and encouraged them to establish transnational systems of animal classification and nomenclature. As Mark Simpson has argued, big game hunting produced an international network of Anglo-Saxon naturalists whose shared desire for racial rejuvenation through animal death transcended national borders; killing animals, in Simpson’s analysis, produced a distinctly “transnational sporting culture.” Animal death united Anglo-Saxon men from Great Britain, the United States, and Canada in ways that excluded marginalized peoples such as women and First Nations, despite their location within the dominion’s national boundaries, thus enabling Canadian sport hunters to stake a claim to membership within a global, imperial elite.

But at the same time, region was also a crucial factor in defining the nation; as such, I pay attention to regional particularities and distinctiveness, noting how, for instance, differing rates of urbanization and industrialization affected humans’ relations with animals. I also trace the ways in which Canada’s regions became more integrated through animal death. The desire to kill wild animals motivated sportsmen to travel

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across the dominion in search of game, while nature stories and hunting magazines circulated throughout the country, as did trophies and museum specimens. The development of industrial meatpacking, too, fostered national networks of commerce and exchange and facilitated colonial expansion. Thus, the circulation of humans and animals within and beyond Canada helped to define the dominion in myriad ways: as a British colony, as a modern nation, as a colonial power, as a site of animal abundance, as a country peopled by a vigorous northern race, to use the language of the time, as a civilized, moral, and upright country—all negotiated through practices of killing animals.

I also suggest that transnationalism and regionalism did not undermine the nation but were oftentimes used as vehicles to promote distinctly nationalist themes. Killing animals helped define Canada in distinctly nationalist terms during a crucial period following Confederation, a time when contemporary observers desired to assert a place for the dominion within the world. The imperialism espoused by many sport hunters was oftentimes nationalistic as well, as turn-of-the-century commentators positioned Canadians’ ability to master the wild spaces and creatures of the country as evidence of national might. Canadian sportsmen defined their nation’s landscapes as sites of northern vigour and ruggedness, articulating a distinctive sense of Canadianness best realized through killing Canadian animals such as moose or bear. Hunters’ claims to have conquered Canada’s north and west in an assertion of national and imperial power, then, indicates the ways in which animal death helped to produce Canada as both a nation and an empire in its own right.10

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10 See, for instance, the rhetoric of Stanley Washburn, *Trails, Trappers, and Tender-feet in the New Empire of Western Canada* (Toronto: The Musson Book Company Ltd., 1913).
Nationalists also suggested that animals were economically valuable in their stimulation of tourism to the dominion, and, as George Colpitts notes, exhibited photographic and taxidermic trophies of dead animal bodies in newspapers, magazines, world’s fairs, and other international exhibitions as a means of promoting Canada as an animalistic site of superabundance, in contrast with countries such as Great Britain and the United States that had foolishly depleted their own animal populations. As the dominion’s entomologist C. Gordon Hewitt remarked in the early years of the twentieth century, whereas “[t]he people of the United States now mourn the loss of their wild life and are endeavouring to rescue the remnant from complete extermination,” Canada still retained the ability to preserve its wildlife. Hewitt concluded by fusing nationalistic arrogance with colonialist dreams of a powerful Canadian nation, realized through animal death: “It rests with us to prove that the advance of civilization into the more remote sections of Canada does not imply the total destruction of wild life, but that civilization in its true sense signifies the elimination of the spirit of barbarism and the introduction of an enlightened attitude.” Killing animals was therefore simultaneously an appeal to belonging in the British Empire, an assertion of national legitimacy, and an effort to realize Canada’s own empire.

The site of animal death was not just productive of various definitions of place but also of articulations of self and community. I analyze how killing animals produced a variety of possible subject locations, some framed through the lens of nation and empire, others framed through the lens of modernity and consumption, others through the lens of race, gender, and class. For instance, while big game hunting defined sportsmen as virile

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and masterful conquerors, it also defined First Nations and rural settlers as poachers, though these hunters likely saw themselves less as criminals and more as independent self-providers. The production and consumption of nature stories produced subjects as sentimental lovers of nature. The wearing of bird hats located women as frivolous wasters of nature—or, as fashionable modern consumers, depending upon one’s perspective. Home slaughtering and butchering constituted men and women as independent producers, while purchasing commercial meat defined one’s status as a modern consumer.

In contrast to the majority of studies on hunting in Canada that analyze the sport as a precursor to modern conservationism, this dissertation focuses instead on the cultural practices of preservation, on the profoundly ironic and paradoxical ways in which Canadians desired to render vanishing traces of animals immortal, over time and across space, in representational, material form, through photography and taxidermy. In my analysis of the relationship between killing animals and representational gestures at preservation, I draw heavily upon the observations of John Berger and Akira Mizuta Lippit, who have argued, respectively, that as physical or material animals disappeared from nineteenth century life, they increasingly reappeared in representational, commodified forms, forms that signified their utter marginality within urban-industrial modernity. Berger argues that such processes stripped animals of the ability to return humans’ consuming gaze, while Lippit suggests that animal representations constitute a means through which men and women mourn the deaths of animals while continuing to
exploit animals. I explore the complicated ways this process of animal disappearance and reappearance in commodified form played out in Canada, a settler colony seeking to establish national legitimacy and assert imperial authority through the killing of animals, yet I problematize the theoretical differentiation of animals as either material or representational, pointing to the ways in which animals continued to have constitutive power over Canadians and Canada long after their deaths. Preserved in photographs and in taxidermic forms, wild animals exerted very real control over processes of self- and national-definition in turn-of-the-century Canada. Moreover, as Jonathan Burt and Matthew Brower point out, scholarly emphasis on animal disappearance and commodification conceptually reiterates historical processes of alienation.

Animal Death: Identification and Kinship, Otherness and Empire

One of the major themes explored in this dissertation is the mutual constitution of human and animal. Canadians did not simply view animals as reflections of human values; Canadians were themselves in part constituted through their morbid encounters with animals. Here I draw inspiration from the works of Harriet Ritvo, Donna Haraway, John Berger, Akira Mizuta Lippit, and others.

14 Here I find a middle ground between Berger and Lippit, on the one hand, and Burt and Brower, on the other hand, by emphasizing how this trope of alienation ought to be understood as a strategy of legitimization, used by humans to mourn the deaths of animals while continuing to kill them. I agree with Burt and Brower that commodification did not alienate humans from nature per se, and that an emphasis on alienation conceptually reiterates separation between human and animal, yet I also argue that alienation had very real historical effects as a distinct trope. Humans’ perception of alienation motivated them to seek new kinds of encounters with animals and to devise a host of strategies that obscured the ongoing violence that characterized these encounters.
and Cary Wolfe, amongst others, who have examined the ways in which humans historically defined themselves through anthropomorphic engagement with nonhuman beings. Ritvo’s influential *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*, for instance, discusses how British men and women viewed particular animals in the Victorian age, arguing that English observers perceived domesticated animals as symbols of civilization and wild animals as signifiers of barbarism and savagery, valuing highly those animals most subordinate, docile, and willing to lend themselves to human mastery.15 This anthropomorphic process of constructing animals, Ritvo continues, demarcated human social relationships and hierarchies more broadly, thus illustrating the ways in which animals themselves, and culturally bound understandings of animals, produced English society in the nineteenth century.

Donna Haraway and Cary Wolfe have also theorized the ways in which animal and human are mutually constitutive. Haraway’s characterization of human-animal relations as “co-constitutive relationships in which none of the partners pre-exist the relating,” and her emphasis on the complex, unfinished, historically contingent ways in which humans and animals define one another shapes my interpretation of the anthropomorphic ways that animals made Canadians just as much as Canadians made animals.16 In *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*, Cary Wolfe suggests that “the ‘human’ is inextricably entwined as never before in material, technological, and informational networks of which it is not the master, and of which it is indeed in some radical sense ‘merely’ the product,” pointing to

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the crucial ways in which humans are the historical products of non-human forces—objects, landscapes, and, importantly, animals.\textsuperscript{17} Not masters of their own making, as proponents of conventional humanism have long claimed, Haraway and Wolfe conclude, the various configurations of “the human” in history can only be understood relationally, particularly as constituted by “the animal.”

Following such scholars, this dissertation problematizes the category of “the animal” as well as “the human,” showing how each was produced in a dynamic process of mutual constitution, taking neither the human nor the animal for granted. My research demonstrates that humans’ definition of self through animal should be seen as a dynamic process that questions the animal as a stable category. Turn-of-the-century Canadians did not simply attribute different values and traits to animals with little consequence; these perceptions in fact had very real effects, oftentimes a matter of life and death for the animals themselves. For example, I show how humans’ constitution of animals as either “wild” or “domestic” defined some animals—game animals in particular—as more “animal” than other animals, such as cows or pigs, which were in turn defined less as “animals” and more as “meat.” This theme becomes evident in my comparison of wild animal death with domestic animal death, as well as in my analysis of Canadian fiction writers’ treatment of wild versus domestic animals in their stories. As I point out, these authors’ desire for kinship with animals extended only to those perceived as wild, failing to conceptualize domestic animals as sufficiently “animal.” I argue that modernity thus remade animals as it did humans; modernity did not simply alter human perceptions of animals but in fact remade both human and animal with very real consequences.

\textsuperscript{17} Cary Wolfe, \textit{Animal Rights: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory} (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003): 6
Mournful Mastery: Reconciling the Preservationist Paradox

Late nineteenth century social commentators were becoming increasingly aware of the disappearance of wild animals from the dominion’s forests. Reflecting a broader culture of antimodernism, English Canadian men and women mourned the deaths of these creatures and lamented animal extinction as an evil consequence of urban-industrial existence. But at the same time, killing the beast had become a way to define their sense of self and nation. To reconcile what I call the preservationist paradox, turn-of-the-century Canadians devised a host of strategies designed to legitimize the deaths of threatened animals, reframing killing as an act demonstrative of socioeconomic privilege, patriarchal prerogative, imperial power, and scientific progress. Nature writers used Darwinian notions of the inevitability of conflict and struggle as a means of positioning humans as superior beings in the biotic community, and their effort to identify with animals naturalized an underlying narrative of colonial conquest. Big game hunters developed an elaborate code of conduct that positioned killing animals as legitimate sport, as constitutive of virility and civility, and used rhetoric of tenderhearted identification with their prey to obscure violent acts of death. Photographers of dead animals used subtle visual and rhetorical codes to justify killing animals, concealing blood and visible signs of suffering and thus erasing human brutality from the photographic frame. Taxidermists appealed to the rhetoric of science and empire and to

18 Here I draw upon the works of scholars who have, in very different contexts, examined the ways in which humans removed themselves from narratives of violence while continuing to enact violence. Mary Louise Pratt, for instance, has identified a trope of anti-conquest through which European colonizers positioned themselves as innocent travelers, removing their role in imperial appropriation. Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan have explored the ways in which women and animals have been reduced to “its,” a means of naturalizing exploitation. See Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan, eds. Animals & Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).
the perceived need to preserve specimens of declining animal populations as a way of legitimizing their own practices of killing, disassembling, and resurrecting animals, while meat producers and consumers fetishized animal flesh as modern commodities, the consumption of which signified power and privilege instead of violence and death, obscuring meat from its animal origins. Such material and rhetorical strategies of legitimization thus reconciled the preservationist paradox, allowing humans to identify with animals as kin, as thinking and feeling beings, while continuing to kill these same creatures in the name of science, nation, and empire.

Canadians’ practices of killing animals, then, their understanding of animal death, and their representational engagement with the bodies of dead animals, were haunted by a deeply contradictory logic reflective of the ways in which urban-industrial modernity shaped human perceptions of animals. Increasingly sensitive toward animal extinction as well as toward human cruelty to animals, people also desired to retain their sense of mastery and control over the natural world. In nature writing, hunting, photography, taxidermy, and meat eating, contemporaries produced animals as familiar beings, seeking kinship and identification, yet they also constituted animals as utterly other, asserting mastery and dominion. This dichotomy between similarity and difference, kinship and otherness, and identification and alienation, mediated human encounters with animals, giving rise to contemporary debates over the meanings of human and animal being within the modern world. I point out that at the same time as humans killed, objectified, and consumed animals, they also used anthropomorphism in ways designed to promote familiarity and likeness, as a means of understanding the human condition at a time of profound social and cultural change. This is evident in nature writers’ efforts to attribute
rationality and emotionality to animals, for instance, in naturalists’ descriptions of
animals’ personalities and patterns of social behaviour, and in hunters’ recognition of
animals’ abilities to gaze back at them. I suggest, however, that expressions of kinship
oftentimes contributed to narratives of mastery, typically by erasing the violence of
animal exploitation and death.

The following chapters emphasize how Canadians’ identification with animals, on
the one hand, and their objectification of animals, on the other hand, mediated their
practices of killing animals and shaped the meanings of animal death in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, beginning with the efforts of nature writers to
foster appreciation for human-animal kinship and concluding with the consolidation of
industrial systems of animal slaughter. Throughout, I trace escalating levels of
objectification wherein animals became abstracted from their origins as living beings in
the minds of contemporary men and women. Chapter one, “Imagining Animal Death:
The Realistic Wild Animal Story and Human-Animal Kinship,” examines fictional
representations of animal death in the nature stories penned by notable Canadian authors
Charles G.D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton, who grappled with contemporary
challenges to conventional ways of thinking about animals, particularly with Darwinian
theories of evolution and with scientific versus sentimental methods of studying nature
and animals more broadly. Nature writers believed that human and animal were kin, and
used narrative moments of animal death to articulate a profound sense of identification
with nonhuman creatures. Yet Seton’s and Roberts’s respective efforts to speak with
animals and to think across the species boundary through sympathetic imaginings of
animal death ultimately failed to collapse hierarchical notions of difference between
human and animal. Wild animal stories suggested that human and animal were unable to coexist in any kind of symbiotic or mutually constitutive way, a commentary on human superiority that doubled as an endorsement of Canada’s colonial project.

Chapter two, “Chasing Animal Death: Sport Hunting, Empire, and Masculinity,” analyzes material practices of killing animals as well as cultural meanings contemporary men and women ascribed to wild animal death in turn-of-the-century Canada. Canadians constructed the sport of hunting as one that rejuvenated the souls and bodies of men trapped within the prison of urban-industrial modernity, with its relentless, mechanical pace of life. Similar to nature writers, Canadian hunters claimed to love animals and identified with their prey on a sentimental, emotional level, oftentimes contemplating possibilities of animal intelligence and human-animal kinship. At the same time, however, sportsmen defined themselves as harbingers of empire, as imperial conquerors and bearers of civilization, thus using animal death as a means of proving their virility and masculinity. Sport hunters’ claims to identify with animals, as well as their embrace of specific rules and etiquette that dictated proper methods of hunting commonly known as the sportsman’s code, positioned the act of killing animals as one of gentility and civility, enabling these men to differentiate their sport from practices of killing conducted by rural market hunters and indigenous hunters.

The various ways in which sportsmen and naturalists authenticated their practices of killing, the multivalent symbolism of dead animal bodies, and the preservationist paradox, are discussed in the following two chapters. Chapter three, “Picturing Animal Death: Photographic Representations of Mourning and Mastery,” points to the ways in which photographic images of dead animals visually reiterated the themes of mastery and
virility embodied within physical practices of sport hunting in Canada. Yet such photographs also depicted an individual and collective sense of regret at the disappearance of animals from the Canadian wilderness. This paradox between the desire to kill and the urge to protect was resolved through a variety of visual and rhetorical tropes that functioned to minimize the destructiveness of human intrusions into nature while subtly confirming human mastery. For instance, these images concealed blatant signifiers of violence such as blood or injury and composed the photographic frame in ways that conveyed a sense of loss and mourning, tacitly acknowledging human culpability in ongoing processes of animal extinction while simultaneously promoting a sentimental ethic of kindness toward animals.

Chapter four, “Preserving Animal Death: Taxidermic Practice and Animal Immortality,” investigates three major taxidermic genres in Victorian Canada, examining how animal bodies were preserved as trophies, as museum specimens, and as ornamental or decorative objects. Taxidermied trophies and specimens signified patriarchal and imperial dominance over the natural world, functioning as material embodiments of human mastery and naturalizing processes of conquest through appeals to scientific progress. These material objects also extended the meanings of animal death outside the community of sport hunters. For instance, sportsmen’s trophies oftentimes became the basis of local natural history museum collections, the animals preserved over time and dispersed across space in ways that allowed a wide variety of Canadians to encounter the objects. Practices of taxidermy, however, also reflected contemporary fears over animal extinction; naturalists’ efforts to promote taxidermy as a means of preserving vanishing remnants of animals exposing a mournful sense of guilt over human intrusion into
animals’ lives. As opposed to the distinctively masculine politics of conventional taxidermic practice, ornamental taxidermy, the use of preserved parts of animals’ bodies as decoration for one’s home or one’s body, indicated efforts to domesticate and feminize wildlife in the late nineteenth century. But whereas trophies and specimens were valued as masculine emblems of authenticity, actively produced through immersion in the wilderness, bird hats were denigrated as tokens of artificiality, passively consumed by fickle women who evidently had no appreciation for nature.

Reflecting the ways in which shifting patterns of hunting, from subsistence to sport, also depended upon the widespread availability of commercially produced, domesticated meat, chapter five, “Consuming Animal Death: Meat Eating and Modernity,” examines the history of meat eating in Canada during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth. I trace changing patterns of meat consumption and the modernization of meat production, analyzing the cultural values and rituals that accompanied practices of consuming animal flesh as food. With increased levels of urban settlement and industrial development, Canadian men and women relied more on domesticated livestock for food and less on wild game, and began purchasing meat from urban butchers and retailers as opposed to killing, disassembling, and preserving their own meat supplies. At the same time, industrial meat producers modernized their methods of slaughtering and packing animals, relocating the act of killing from the site of consumption to the site of production and positioning their operations as modern marvels of scientific engineering and hygienic practice. Owing to such changes, animal flesh as a commodity became sanitized, the violence lurking beneath each steak or pork chop concealed within the rhetoric of health and efficiency.
Eating animal flesh helped to define Canadians as modern, virile, consuming subjects of a technologically advanced nation.

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“Killing the Beast: Animal Death in Canadian Literature, Hunting, Photography, Taxidermy, and Slaughterhouses, 1865-1920” draws connections between sites of human-animal interactions that have previously been treated separately, whether in literary studies, visual and material culture studies, environmental history, food history, or economic history, showing how writing about, killing, photographing, stuffing, and eating animals were made meaningful through the lens of nation and empire. The various discourses of race, gender, and class that emerged through encounters between species become particularly meaningful when considering Canada’s status as a colonial entity struggling to assert control over its own spaces and beings, while also defining itself in an international sphere. Turn-of-the-century Canadians produced strategies that allowed them to reconcile their anthropomorphic identification with animals and their instrumentalized exploitation of animals, making both wild and domestic animals consumable in ways that signified modern subjectivity and modern nationhood. This dissertation thus demonstrates the complex ways humans reconciled dominion and kinship in a context shaped on the one hand by Darwinian challenges to the species barrier and rising sentimentalism toward animals, and on the other hand by colonial imperatives of asserting mastery and difference.
1: Imagining Animal Death: The Realistic Wild Animal Story and Human-Animal Kinship

Contemplating fictionalized moments of death constituted one of the many ways in which Canadians killed animals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter examines the wild animal stories of Canadian nature writers Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts, suggesting that these authors used tales of animal death to explore three crucial aspects of human-animal relations: kinship, companionship, and dominance. Nature writers described animal suffering and death from animals’ perspectives in the hopes of convincing readers that animals could think and feel like any human. Influenced by Darwinian theories of evolution, then, these authors identified with wild animals and used fiction to speak through animals as a way of promoting human-animal kinship and challenging species boundaries. Roberts and Seton also believed that animals ought to be understood as individual beings with distinctive personalities, or ‘animalities’, thus resisting the contemporary trend in natural history toward generalization and classification based on species.

Yet despite their efforts to contemplate possibilities of mutually constitutive companionship with individual animals, nature writers also endorsed themes of human dominance over animal. Running throughout these stories is an underlying current of human mastery; they might be kin, they might identify with one another in ways that defied species boundaries, but in turn-of-the-century fictional tales of animal death, humans were unquestionably superior beings in the hierarchy of life. As such, Seton and
Roberts could not avoid weaving ideological constructions of nation and empire into their anthropomorphomic engagements with animal others, naturalizing colonial dominance and rendering animal death an inevitable feature of modern existence.

The realistic wild animal story was a unique genre of literature that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century in North America. These particular animal stories differed from other tales involving animals in several important ways. Whereas conventional literary depictions of animals were essentially allegorical in nature, intended to teach lessons on human morality and etiquette, the wild animal stories of Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts were intended to provide a supposedly truthful and objective representation of animals’ lives. Nature writers desired to depict animals on their own terms and explored the inner thoughts and feelings of animals as well as their life cycles, motivations, and behaviours. Although Seton and Roberts tended to romanticize their tales and humanize their animal characters, they each claimed that their stories were authentic and absolutely truthful narratives, based on years of first-hand experience watching and observing nonhuman creatures in their natural environments.¹

Ernest Thompson Seton was born in 1860 in a coastal town of England and migrated to Lindsay, Ontario, in 1866. The young artist developed an interest in natural history and animal behaviourism at an early age and spent his spare time studying the flora and fauna of southern Ontario. Seton traveled between England, Paris, New York, New Mexico, and Manitoba as a young adult, writing nature stories, studying art and illustration, and exploring remote forests and territories. In 1892 he became the official naturalist for the province of Manitoba and, after his story of Lobo, a wolf he had

struggled to kill in New Mexico, appeared in *Scribner’s Magazine* in 1894, the naturalist gained notoriety for his role in establishing a new genre of realism in animal writing. Although the writer had been raised in a strict Christian environment, he rejected the Judeo-Christian notion of humans’ right to dominate wild animals. His experiences in New Mexico, where he had been hired by ranchers and farmers to kill wolves who preyed on domestic livestock, had led him to cultivate a new appreciation for animal life, and he increasingly perceived nonhuman beings as thinking, feeling, highly intelligent individual creatures. Though once an avid hunter, Seton gave up the rifle in favour of the camera, pen, and paintbrush and devoted his life to studying, painting, and writing about wild animals.²

Sir Charles G.D. Roberts was also born in the year 1860, in Douglas, New Brunswick. Roberts attended high school and university in Fredericton and, as an adult, divided his time between New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Toronto, New York City, and England, writing and teaching literature, studying nature and wild animals, raising a family, and gaining notoriety as a poet and author. Similar to Seton, Roberts believed that animals were intelligent and emotional creatures that deserved ethical consideration as individual beings and rejected the notion that animals were unfeeling objects to be exploited simply for human use and consumption. Roberts’s interpretation of nature was relatively darker than was Ernest Thompson Seton’s. Whereas Seton believed that men and women were able to recover a sense of kinship with wild animals and could thus seek rejuvenation in nature, Roberts was much more ambiguous regarding the potential for human and animal to coexist peacefully. Although adamant in his belief that human and

animal were kin, the New Brunswick author was much less convinced that modern, civilized humans could in fact experience the authentic world of wild animals or find redemption in nature.³

Roberts believed that animal stories ought to enable human readers to identify with animals as kin and companion and objected to the ways in which animal individuality had been lost through conventional literary representations of animals as reflections of anthropocentric concerns. The author pointed to the ways in which his stories, similar to those of Seton, diverged from earlier genres of animal writing in their rejection of the tendency to reduce animal characters to allegorical symbols of human virtues and vices. “The beasts, not being in a position to resent the ignoble office thrust upon them,” Roberts lamented of animal myths and fables, “were compelled to do duty as concrete types of those obvious virtues and vices of which alone the unsophisticated ethical sense was ready to take cognizance.”⁴ The New Brunswick-born nature writer continued to argue that the anthropocentrism of conventional animal stories distanced the world of animals from that of humans and encouraged a kind of human narcissism that valued animals only insofar as the creatures symbolized anthropocentric concerns.⁵

Seton, too, defined the genre as one that consisted of tales that “in story form, aim to convey an accurate idea of the Animal’s life and behaviour, its mental processes, its trials

⁵ Ibid., 19. As he noted, “[i]t was simple to remember that the tiger was cruel, the fox cunning, the wolf rapacious. And so, as advancing civilization drew an ever-widening line between man and the animals, and men became more and more engrossed in the interests of their own kind, the personalities of the wild creatures which they had once known so well became obscured to them, and the creatures themselves came to be regarded, for the purposes of literature, as types or symbols merely.”
and methods of meeting each successive stress” as opposed to animal myths, fables, or fairy tales, which were more symbolic and allegorical in nature.6

Despite their claims to objectivity and authenticity, however, Roberts, Seton, and several other nature writers faced criticism from natural scientists, journalists, and social commentators for their tendencies to anthropomorphize animals and to misrepresent the true workings of nature. This charge of nature fakery, led by American author John Burroughs and supported by the likes of future president Theodore Roosevelt, sparked a heated controversy over whether fiction was an acceptable medium of interpreting and propagating the truth about animal being. Yet the conflict between nature writers and natural historians struck deeper than a simple disagreement over the representational form best able to convey the truths of animals’ lives. The ‘nature fakers’ controversy, as it came to be known, was, at its core, about competing ways of understanding the nature of both humans and animals in a rapidly modernizing world. While nature writers promoted a form of empathetic identification with nonhuman beings and argued that animals were emotional creatures that should be understood as individual subjects, natural historians and scientists believed that detached examination of observable animal behaviour and classification based on quantifiable species categories, rather than speculation on the inner thoughts and feelings of animal others, was the proper means of ordering existence in an increasingly technological and scientific age.

The content of realistic wild animal stories varied considerably, but several common tropes and themes are prominent in the genre. Human characters are often represented as cruel, selfish intruders into the wilderness, failing to respect the integrity

of animals’ lives and viewing nonhuman beings as existing solely for the purposes of human use and exploitation. Nature writers constructed a clear divide between the domestic world of humans and livestock animals and the wild world of game animals, frequently writing stories about the perils of domesticated animals lost in the wilderness or wild animals captured by callous humans and reared in captivity, each trope a critique of human intervention in the wilderness and a sanction of human dominance over domesticated beings. The protagonists of realistic wild animal stories are typically males whose mother is killed by a human hunter or animal foe shortly after he comes of age and who grow to become the largest, strongest, and smartest member of his species. Often ending with the death of the protagonist at the hands of a human hunter or through combat with another animal, these stories also illustrated nature writers’ perception of wild nature as a harsh, Darwinian-type environment, one in which animals struggled and competed with one another for survival in an unforgiving world.

In a short story called “In the Year of No Rabbits,” for instance, Roberts describes the consequences of declining rabbit populations upon the other inhabitants of the forest. In one particular year, rabbits had been “exiled in mass, inexorably, by some caprice of the unseen Powers,” which had resulted in “red anarchy in the wild. For the rabbit is your great reconciler, your great keeper of the peace. It is he that keeps life more or less regulated for the fiercely individual and ungovernable hunters and prowlers.” This lack of rabbits disrupts the balance of power in the forest. Lynx become desperate for food and begin to prey upon the young of animals usually left undisturbed such as moose and bear, which then causes conflict between the lynx predators and adult moose and between bears and moose. “Meanwhile, the baby lynxes, in their den, now hungry past all caution

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and mewing harshly,” Roberts concludes, describing the plight of the young kittens waiting for their mother to return with food, unaware that she had been killed by a bear, “might have been left to a lingering and piteous death.” The baby lynx are saved from such suffering by the appearance of a fox, however, also hungry from the lack of rabbits. The fox’s consumption of the kittens is not presented as a tragic event but as a natural act of predation that in fact spares the young from experiencing pain: “[t]here was some spitting, feeble but courageous, and then the cries of loneliness and hunger stopped. The fox was too businesslike to play with and torment his victims, as one of the cat family would do, but killed them at once and made haste to carry them off to his den.”

Ernest Thompson Seton’s and Charles G.D. Roberts’s respective stories were thus reflective of a particular moment in the late nineteenth century when Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection was becoming increasingly popular amongst the general public. While characterizing nature as a site of vicious struggle between animals for survival, these authors also believed that animals had developed highly sophisticated mental and emotional capacities and that, therefore, human and animal had most likely evolved from a common ancestor. Roberts argued in the introduction to one of his many collections of animal stories, *The Kindred of the Wild*, that animals were not simply creatures of instinct but were rational, thinking, feeling beings; human and animal were not so distinct as had previously been believed. These nature writers rejected the Cartesian characterization of animals as mindless, unfeeling, machine-like automatons and believed that animals exhibited human traits such as courage and faithfulness, formed cohesive and loyal family units, and learned the ways of the world from experience and

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parental teaching as well as from instinct. Such convictions did not, however, go uncontested in the turn-of-the-century North American scientific community.

**Science versus Sentiment: The Nature Fakers and Ways of Knowing**

In 1903 American author and naturalist John Burroughs published an article in *Atlantic Monthly* entitled “Real and Sham Natural History” that criticized the realistic wild animal stories of Seton and Roberts, amongst others, for overly humanizing animal characters and romanticizing tales of animal life. Scathingly referring to Seton’s *Wild Animals I Have Known* as “Wild Animals I ALONE Have Known,” Burroughs argued that the nature writer’s animal characters were more idiosyncratic figments of his imagination than an accurate reflection of ‘real’ wild animals. The critic did acknowledge his admiration of Roberts’s *The Kindred of the Wild*, writing that “the volume is in many ways the most brilliant collection of animal stories that has appeared,” yet he argued that Roberts, too, suffered from the anthropomorphic tendency to reduce animal characters to humanized beings. Roberts’s animals, Burroughs wrote, “are simply human beings disguised as animals; they think, feel, plan, suffer as we do; in fact, exhibit almost the entire human psychology.” Burroughs reserved his harshest judgment for Ernest Thompson Seton as well as for nature writer Rev. William J. Long, claiming that in the works of these particular writers “the line between fact and fiction is repeatedly crossed, and a deliberate attempt is made to induce the reader to cross, too, and to work such a spell upon him that he shall not know that he has crossed and is in the land of make-believe.”

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Burroughs was particularly critical of nature writers’ characterizations of animal thought and behaviour. The critic pointed to these fakers’ belief that wild animals organized themselves in ways similar to humans, in cohesive family and social units, and argued that nonhuman beings did not in fact mimic the conventions of human civilization. Animals did not teach their young the ways of the wild, Burroughs argued, but acted according to their inherited instincts. “I can believe many things I have never seen or known,” Burroughs wrote, claiming that his rejection of realistic wild animal stories did not stem from any lack of imagination or failure to appreciate fiction. “I discredit them because they are so widely at variance with all we know of the wild creatures of their ways. I discredit them as I do any other glaring counterfeit, or any poor imitation of an original, or as I would discredit a story of my friend that was not in keeping with what I knew of his character.”

The critic argued that the problem with these works was not their status as fiction per se but rather was their effort to claim the mantle of natural history, a discipline that was allegedly more objective and more quantifiable than was literary speculation. As another critic wrote, if an author such as Roberts “[w]ould but state in the preface to his books that his studies are not based upon personal observation of their subjects, but are as accurate as he can make them from other sources of information, he would not only be dealing honestly with his readers but he would, in my opinion, greatly enhance the value of his really remarkable imaginative works.”

An anonymous writer in Rod & Gun in Canada agreed, arguing that nature writers were ill informed and ignorant of the lives of animals. “The crop of ‘nature writers’ is a rank one,” the author lamented. “It would almost appear as though every

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12 Ibid., 141.
professional writer, who is not seriously crippled in the arms, is holding a pencil in either hand and scribbling for dear life. The blunders they make, and the statements they foist upon an unsuspecting and long-suffering public—Ye gods!”

Future American president Theodore Roosevelt joined the critics of nature writers such as Seton, Roberts, and Long, and denounced the deceptiveness and falsehood of animal stories in an article called “Nature Fakers” in 1907. Roosevelt argued that these particular authors took too much artistic liberty in interpreting the facts of nature. “The highest type of student of nature should be able to see keenly and write interestingly and should have an imagination that then will enable him to interpret the facts,” the outdoors enthusiast wrote. “But he is not a student of nature at all who sees not keenly but falsely, who writes interestingly and untruthfully, and whose imagination is used not to interpret facts but to invent them.” Roosevelt contrasted these works of fakery with the texts of ‘legitimate’ writers such as Burroughs and preservationist John Muir and argued that nature fakers insulted true lovers of the wilderness by deceiving the general public. Similar to other Progressive-era diatribes against misleading public interest and muckraking exposés against urban-industrial institutions, Roosevelt condemned these nature fakers as the “yellow journalists of the woods” who were threats to national morality and intelligence in their propagation of falsehoods and ill-informed sentiments.

Like Burroughs, Roosevelt argued that these stories would be less offensive if they simply admitted their fictional status and renounced claims to objectivity and truth.

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14 Anonymous, untitled article, Rod & Gun in Canada Volume V no. 8 (January 1904): 440.
16 Ibid., 194.
The nature fakers controversy, then, was a debate located at the intersection of competing understandings of fact and fiction, authenticity and artifice, sentiment and science, and self and other. Burroughs, Roosevelt, and other critics did not object to authors’ use of fiction to describe animals’ lives; they criticized nature writers’ efforts to claim the mantle of authentic natural history. Although it was acceptable for artists to exaggerate and take literary license, Burroughs wrote, the problem with Seton et al was their effort to veil the subjective, sentimental character of their stories: “Mr. Thompson Seton says in capital letters that his stories are true, and it is this emphatic assertion that makes the judicious grieve. True as romance, true in their artistic effects, true in their power to entertain the young reader, they certainly are true but as natural history they as certainly are not.”¹⁷ Burroughs’s colleague, a critic named W.F. Ganong, similarly argued that the problem with realistic wild animal stories was the simple fact that science, not literature, was the only true way to study objectively the processes of nature. Ganong characterized science and literature as fundamentally incommensurable sites of knowledge, as “mutually exclusive” means of understanding the natural world. Arguing that the literary man “has little regard, therefore, for showy leaps from scanty fact to sensational generalization,” the critic chastised nature writers’ supposed disregard for observation and quantification and their indulgence in imaginative fancy.¹⁸

Of the three authors singled out for the harshest criticism, William J. Long chose to defend himself against the charges of fakery leveled by Burroughs and Roosevelt in the pages of popular literary and scientific periodicals, while Seton and Roberts, for the most part, ignored the controversy and instead pleaded their case in the prefaces and

¹⁷ Burroughs, “Real and Sham Natural History,” 132.
introductions to their collections of animal stories. Long did not attempt to position his stories as texts of natural history, nor did he dispute the difference between science and literature. Long countered his critics’ arguments by claiming that the mysteries of nature could only be understood through a personally involved, sentimental approach, and not through methods of detached observation. The Reverend positioned the study of nature as a very different enterprise from the pursuit of science. While science was bound by rigid rules and dogmatic methods of investigation that ultimately failed to understand the “unknown world of suggestion and freedom and inspiration,” Long wrote, nature study, as pursued through creative literary imagining, fostered a personal, emotional engagement with the natural world and encouraged a sentimental appreciation for the individuality of animals that was lost in scientists’ effort to seek general laws and patterns. Long thus characterized science, as an ontological and epistemological system, as unable to appreciate the intricate nature of animals’ lives, as a form of essentialism that could not capture the individuality of specific animals. “Every animal has an individuality,” Long concluded, “however, small or dim; that is certain. And the nature-student must seek from his own individuality, which is the only thing that he knows absolutely to interpret truthfully and sympathetically the individual before him.”

In the preface to his 1904 collection of animal stories, *The Watchers of the Trails*, Charles G.D. Roberts also discussed the role of anthropomorphism in the debate between sentiment and science, defending his personal authority in matters of woodcraft and animal behaviour. In recalling his childhood growing up amidst the forests of New

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Brunswick, observing the ways of wild animals, Roberts argued that he had always maintained a keen appreciation for animals, a “sympathetic understanding of the wild kindreds.”\footnote{Charles G.D. Roberts, The Watchers of the Trails: A Book of Animal Life (Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company Ltd., 1904): viii.} The author continued to declare that although his stories were fictional, they were truthful representations of animals’ lives based on his many years of experience observing the habits of nonhuman beings: “[t]he stories of which this volume is made up are avowedly fiction. They are, at the same time, true, in that the material of which they are moulded consists of facts,—facts as precise as painstaking observation and anxious regard for truth can make them.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, viii.} Roberts noted that although “a very distinguished author” had characterized his stories as anthropocentric, his stories did not humanize animals. If his animal figures appeared to think and feel in ways akin to humans, this was a reflection of animal intelligence and human-animal kinship. Roberts argued that what his critics saw as overconfident anthropomorphism in his stories was in fact commonsense inference of animal behavior, obvious to any experienced naturalist.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, ix.}

In other words, the New Brunswick nature writer reasoned that, if humans were themselves animals, human and animal were one and the same, and animal stories could not possibly be anthropomorphic. The author made such sentiments clear in the preface to his novel Red Fox, arguing that each experience and event described in the narrative had occurred in the life of at least some foxes and that whatever emotions his fox characters displayed “may safely be accepted by the most cautious as fox emotions, not as human emotions,” owing to the fact that “man is himself an animal” and thus “any full presentation of an individual animal of one of the more highly developed species must...
depict certain emotions not altogether unlike those which a human being might experience under like conditions."24

Ernest Thompson Seton, too, was careful to defend the accuracy of his stories. As he declared in a note to readers at the beginning of *Wild Animals I Have Known*, published in 1905, “[t]hese stories are true. Although I have left the strict line of historical truth in many places, the animals in this book were all real characters. They lived the lives I have depicted, and showed the stamp of heroism and personality more strongly by far than it has been in the power of my pen to tell.”25 Similar to Roberts, Seton emphasized the individuality of animals and argued that one learned more about the ways of nonhuman beings by exploring intimately the inner thoughts and motivations of one particular animal than by generalizing and essentializing common habits of animals on a species level. “I believe that natural history has lost much by the vague general treatment that is so common,” Seton wrote, in a rather remarkable assertion of animal individuality that in many ways foreshadowed the efforts of twenty-first century posthumanist scholars to deconstruct essentialist constructions of ‘the animal.’ “What satisfaction would be derived from a ten-page sketch of the habits and customs of man? How much more profitable it would be to devote that space to the life of some one great man. This is the principle I have endeavored to apply to my animals. The real personality of the individual, and his view of life are my theme, rather than the ways of the race in general, as viewed by a casual and hostile human eye.”26

The nature fakers controversy was therefore not a simple disagreement over the factuality of nature writers’ stories but was a debate over fundamentally different ways of knowing animals, one through identification with individual animals, using anthropomorphism as a means of understanding both human and animal being, the other through scientific methods of objectification, constituting the animal as utterly other, using essentialism in order to understand animals broadly within species categories. The authors of realistic wild animal stories, as well as their critics, then, appeared to agree that science and literature were fundamentally different paths of inquiry. They disagreed, however, over the particular site of knowledge best suited to discovering the truth of animal life: science, with its deductive and inductive methods of producing knowledge, its effort to identify observable characteristics and construct generalized systems of classification, or literature, with its attempt to encourage emotional and sentimental identification between human and animal and to highlight the individuality of humans and animals. Was literature or natural history, sentimentalism or science, best able to capture the authenticity of animals’ lives?

Historian Ralph Lutts has suggested that the nature fakers conflict was waged over three separate but interrelated issues: the perceived need for animal stories to be authentic, truthful representations of animals’ lives, the nature and character of animal intelligence, particularly regarding the relative roles of reason versus instinct, and the value of emotionality as opposed to scientific objectivity as the best means one could approach nature study. The nature fakers debate, then, reflected anxiety over the emergence of new systems of knowing and understanding the world more broadly. At a time when scientific methods of experimentation and quantification were gaining greater

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academic hegemony, Victorian men and women feared what were, in their eyes, cold and inhuman techniques of scholarly investigation. Coral Lansbury, for instance, has argued that antivivisection movements in nineteenth century England stemmed from Victorians’ anxious concern over the increasing dominance of scientific methods of knowledge production and the corresponding decline of sentimental ways of relating to one’s peers and one’s environment.28 Mourning the apparent death of empathy and emotionality as legitimate means of understanding the world, nineteenth century observers worried about the consequences of a technological society and scientists’ efforts to rationalize the natural environment.

Such concerns were particularly relevant at a time when the growth of modern capitalism was becoming increasingly entangled with the mass killing of animals. The views of Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts, who argued that nonhuman beings were sentient, thinking and feeling creatures deserving of rights, sympathy, and consideration as fellow inhabitants of the earth, conflicted with the slowly emerging instrumentalist, utilitarian perspective of animals that characterized nonhuman beings as existing simply to satisfy the material needs of humans.29 The question of whether animals possessed mental faculties akin to those of humans was thus not simply a question of scientists’, hunters’, or vivisectors’ morality. It was also a debate over how best to conceptualize the workings of a secular universe and humans’ place within the cosmos. Was the extent of progress and civilization to be measured through the magnitude of humans’ mastery of nature and objectification of other beings or through the degree of their sentimental recognition of the rights of nonhuman creatures? Was the

world divinely sanctioned, naturally ordered, or purposeless and random? Was the boundary between human and animal less stable than conventionally thought, as Seton and Roberts argued, and, if so, how should humans behave toward their nonhuman counterparts at a time when the growth of urban-industrial capitalism was becoming more and more dependent on the deaths of animals? These were the kinds of questions with which authors like Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts wrestled in their narrative efforts to seek kinship and companionship with animals and to defy the essentializing logic of modernism.

**The Darwinian Revolution and Human-Animal Kinship**

Nature writers combatted charges of anthropomorphism by using arguments that were themselves anthropomorphic, arguing that, since human and animal were kin, animals naturally exhibited human patterns of thought and emotion. Such observations reflected the influence of Darwinian theories of evolution and natural selection in turn-of-the-century animal writing. British naturalist Charles Darwin argued that animals with the specific physical and mental traits best suited to adapt to random environmental fluctuations in a particular time and place were more likely to survive in a competitive world, one in which many more beings were born than could survive. Hence, in the struggle for scarce resources, animals were selected according to their ability to adjust to random environmental change. But this notion of evolution by natural selection did not imply that beings, human or animal, were evolving toward a state of perfection. There was no guarantee that the strongest or most intelligent would survive; evolution occurred

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by selecting those best suited to random, unpredictable changes in the natural world. Many of Darwin’s contemporaries were disturbed by the randomness and unpredictability inherent in his theory and were troubled by the implication that characteristics such as intelligence, spirituality, and morality may have been accidental, unintended consequences of evolutionary adaptation and vicious struggle rather than inherent, essential traits of humanity. The ultimate conclusion Darwin reached was that, given the evolution of various species over time and place, human and animal had descended from a common ancestor.

The influence of Charles Darwin’s ideas upon Seton’s and Roberts’s respective animal stories is evident in three distinct, yet interrelated, ways: first, the ways in which nature writers conceptualized the workings of nature as a violent struggle between animals for survival in a harsh and forbidding natural environment; second, how authors characterized animals as highly intelligent, rational, and sentimental creatures who were capable of learning from experience as well as acting by instinct; and third, the ways in


which these writers deconstructed the boundary between humans and animals and argued for the case of human-animal kinship. The stories of Roberts and Seton are filled with moments of profound encounter between human and animal, particularly poignant in the narrative instances of animal death, which rendered the species divide between human and nonhuman unstable and illustrated the means through which Canadians used animals to articulate a sense of self and a sense of place.

Some scholars have argued that the works of Roberts and Seton were efforts to resist Darwinian theories of evolution by natural selection and to present an alternative conceptualization of the universe in which human and animal were guided by purposeful and divinely ordered laws. Robert H. MacDonald has suggested that realistic wild animal stories were “part of a popular revolt against Darwinian determinism, and an affirmation of man’s need for moral and spiritual values. The animal world provides models of virtue, and exemplifies the order of nature. The works of Seton and Roberts are thus celebrations of rational ethical animals, who, as they rise above instinct, reach toward the spiritual.” These nature writers found the implications of Darwinism distasteful and even frightening, MacDonald claims, and, though their stories did acknowledge the brutal nature of animals’ lives and provided violent descriptions of animals’ deaths, their tales were efforts to understand the place of both human and animal amidst a profound societal crisis of faith. “The fiction of both Seton and Roberts is inspired by their desire to present a moral and coherent order in the life of the wild,” MacDonald writes. “Animals, we are told, are very much like ourselves. They obey certain laws, they demonstrate qualities we would do well to admire, they are our own kin. They inhabit what is often clearly a

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mythic world; they are symbols in our own ontological system." Seton’s and Roberts’s efforts to inject moral systems into the lives of animals indicate their rejection of Darwinian evolution as a random and unpredictable process, according to MacDonald, and their humanization of animal characters was not so much an effort to collapse the barrier between human and animal as it was an attempt to read human concerns onto allegorical nonhuman figures.

Other critics, however, have argued that realistic wild animal stories in fact embodied nature writers’ acceptance of Darwinian theories and revealed their efforts to render such ideas acceptable and palatable to the general public. Ralph Lutts argues that although Seton’s interpretation of Darwinism was more amenable to the role of divinity and spirituality in nature than was Roberts’s, both authors accepted the basic premises of evolution by natural selection. Similarly, Thomas R. Dunlop suggests that Darwinian ideas enabled nature writers to justify their perception of animals as thinking and feeling creatures within the rhetoric of natural science. Since Darwin believed the boundary between human and animal was unstable, his successors could legitimately claim that animals had developed the sophisticated intellectual and emotional faculties as had humans. Dunlap argues that realistic wild animal stories allowed readers to accommodate the implications of evolutionary theory by encouraging them to identify with animal characters. These authors’ depiction of nature as a vicious site of struggle, competition, and death was harsh, to be sure, but they did so in ways that illustrated beauty and life amidst violence and decay. Roberts and Seton, according to Dunlop, found ways to accommodate the seemingly amoral and secular tenets of natural selection into a

34 Ibid., 231.
framework of understanding humans’ place in the universe that was, in fact, highly moralistic, which rendered Darwinian theories acceptable to the reading public.\textsuperscript{36}

Though often discussed in tandem, Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts did express considerable differences in their acceptance of Darwinian evolution and in their overall conceptualization of the natural world. Seton was much more optimistic than was his New Brunswick counterpart; though critical of the negative consequences of urban-industrial modernity upon contemporary society, Seton also believed that humanity was ultimately able to seek redemption in a return to nature. The artist and author believed that both humans and animals were inherently good, moral creatures and that those who strayed had been corrupted by capitalist civilization. Seton believed there was a higher purpose in life and perceived the natural world as one of freedom, authenticity, and joy, one that, while vicious and oftentimes tragic in the competition between beings for survival, did offer an alternative to the stifling, artificial world of human materialism and corruption.\textsuperscript{37} Nature, Seton argued, was in fact the source of human morality. In \textit{The Natural History of the Ten Commandments}, the author argued that humans’ moral codes were in fact derived from the ways of animals and nature and that, consequently, the antidote to the immorality and excessive materialism caused by overcivilization was to be found in the wilderness.\textsuperscript{38}

Roberts, conversely, was more ambivalent about the implications of Darwinism upon the human and animal worlds. His stories are much darker tales of struggle, survival, and death and emphasize themes of chance and unpredictability in nature.

\textsuperscript{36} Dunlop, “The Realistic Animal Story,” 244.
\textsuperscript{37} Fiamengo, “Looking at Animals,” 46.
\textsuperscript{38} Ernest Thompson Seton, \textit{A Natural History of the Ten Commandments} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907).
Though the wilderness was a place of beauty and renewal, it was also a site of fierce, uncontrollable violence. The New Brunswick author was critical toward modern society, as was Seton, but he was less convinced that humans could find redemption in the wilderness. Roberts’s stories suggest that a return to nature ultimately is not possible and that humans have become irrevocably alienated from the wilderness and from the wild animals in nature. Humans, then, have become too enmeshed in their own urban-industrial capitalist society to redeem their selfish and materialistic ways. But although Roberts believed that humans had become estranged from their animal counterparts, he also embraced Darwin’s notion that human and animal were kin, agreeing with animal protectionists who had long claimed that nonhuman beings were deserving of humane treatment based on their capacity to experience suffering. Supporting such efforts to problematize the boundary between human and animal, Roberts argued that animals were highly intelligent beings capable of strategizing and planning, forming cohesive familial and social units, and behaving altruistically and empathetically.

The influence of Darwinian thought on nature writing is evident in Seton’s and Roberts’s respective depictions of nature as a site of vicious struggle and competition between animals for survival. Seton, for instance, famously declared in the introduction to *Wild Animals I Have Known* that “[t]he fact that these stories are true is the reason why all are tragic. The life of a wild animal *always has a tragic end.*” The author and naturalist continued, arguing that “[n]o wild animal dies of old age. Its life has soon or late a tragic end. It is only a question of how long it can hold out against its foes.”

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40 Lutts, *The Nature Fakers*, 146
41 Seton, *Wild Animals I Have Known*, 12.
42 *Ibid.*, 120.
believed that few animals reached old age and that the moment any sort of weakness, physical or mental, began to take its toll on an animal, nature intervened and the animal was vanquished by a stronger enemy. Yet as Margaret Atwood has argued, the deaths of Seton’s animal characters are more pathetic than they are tragic, since tragic characters typically die due to an inherent character flaw that causes their downfall.\(^{43}\) Seton’s animal protagonists rarely suffer such flaws and are, in fact, constructed as perfect specimens, the bravest, strongest, most empathetic and intelligent members of their species.

Charles G.D. Roberts’s stories were particularly poignant in their depiction of nature as a site of violent struggle between animals for survival in a harsh, unpredictable environment. The author told tales of animals forced to confront formidable predators, cruel humans, and ruthless forces of nature, and oftentimes his protagonists survived horrific ordeals using their courage and intelligence only to be brutally attacked and killed the next paragraph. Roberts did not refrain from describing animal violence in graphic, vivid, gory detail, and his descriptions of violence suggested that, in a harsh and competitive world, the lives of animals were brutish and short, most often ended quickly by random, physical combat with enemies.\(^{44}\)

Roberts’s construction of wild animal death is graphic and vicious, to be sure, yet the author desired to teach his readers that such acts of brutality must be accepted as an inevitable part of nature. The author often avoided sentimentalizing and moralizing upon animal death and represented the deaths of his animal protagonists as unpredictable yet inescapable occurrences. Whereas animal death in Seton’s stories occasionally serves a

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\(^{44}\) See, for instance, the graphic descriptions of animal deaths contained within Roberts’s *The Kindred of the Wild*. Roberts, *The Kindred of the Wild*, 345.
higher purpose, demonstrating the bravery, courage, and self-sacrifice of the animal hero against formidable and cunning foes, the deaths of nonhuman beings in Roberts’s stories is much more ambiguous. The strongest, most empathetic, or most intelligent creatures do not survive the vicious competition for resources in Roberts’s tales despite their superior mental and physical capacities, which illustrates the author’s acceptance of Darwinian theories of evolution as a random process that did not progress in any particular direction, let alone toward perfection. Roberts characterized animal predation as an act that must be accepted as a natural part of animal life, one that ultimately did not serve any higher purpose. Yet although the author’s rendering of animal death is graphic and oftentimes gory, Roberts also sought to convey the beauty and mystery inherent in nature’s cycles of death and renewal. In describing combat between lynx over a deer carcass, for instance, Roberts juxtaposed imagery of death and decay with notions of rebirth and beauty, writing of the mystical, “transforming touch” of nature, capable of turning “the torn bodies” of the lynx and deer into something “remote, unsubstantial and visionary.”

In Roberts’s stories, then, death and violence are not necessarily negative aspects of wild nature but are part of a broader cycle of animal life. The author desired to teach readers that natural processes were delicately balanced and that competition and struggle were needed to regulate nature’s equilibrium.

The influence of Darwinian theories of evolution on nature writers was also evident in their perception of animals as highly intelligent, rational, and emotional beings. Both Roberts and Seton believed that animals were capable of learning from parental teaching and from their own life experiences. Many of Seton’s stories follow a common trope in which a young animal learns the lessons particular to his species from

45 Roberts, The Watchers of the Trails, 152.
his mother. A young moose calf, for instance, learns what moose eat, how moose interact with other creatures of the forest, and what moose fear. Though criticized for the ways in which such ideas seemingly humanized animals, Seton and Roberts maintained their belief in the capacity of animals to learn from parents and experience, though they also acknowledged the role of instinct in the overall intelligence of nonhuman beings. Both authors suggested that animals behaved according to three fundamental factors: instinct, experience, and education. Roberts argued that inherited instinct was the most important factor in animal intelligence, followed by experience, and cautiously suggested that whatever aspects of animal behaviour could not be explained by instinct or experience must stem from parental teaching.\textsuperscript{46} Seton was much more explicit in arguing that young animals learned behaviours particular to their species by mimicking the actions of their parents.\textsuperscript{47}

In \textit{Lives of the Hunted}, which was published after the nature fakers controversy, Seton sharpened his theory of animal intelligence and outlined a model of animal rationality that closely resembled that of Roberts, suggesting that animals’ mental faculties were comprised of instinct and experience as well as of parental education. “A wild animal has three sources of wisdom,” Seton argued, echoing Roberts, in a story about a wolf named Tito. “First, \textit{the experiences of its ancestors}, in the form of instinct, which is inborn learning, hammered into the races by ages of selection and tribulation. This is the most important to begin with, because it guards him from the moment he is born. Second, \textit{the experience of his parents and comrades}, learned chiefly by example. This becomes most important as soon as the young can run. Third, \textit{the personal}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47}Seton, \textit{Wild Animals I Have Known}, 207.
\end{itemize}
experience of the animal itself.” The author continued to use the story of Tito to elaborate on his theory of animal intelligence, explaining how the wolf had learned from experience to avoid traps and poison, and how she knew instinctively to stay away from dogs and humans. Seton also described the emotional world of the animal, writing that although hunters and ranchers viewed wolves such as Tito as vicious, cruel beings intent on destroying livestock, the animals were sentient, feeling beings who were concerned about providing for their young.

The animals in Seton’s and Roberts’s stories, then, are capable of planning and strategizing, of understanding complicated concepts and events, and of thinking critically and rationally. In one story about a duck captured by a human hunter and used as a decoy to lure other ducks, Roberts describes the duck’s ability to understand the situation and to realize that he is being used as a tool that enables the hunter to murder members of his feathered kin: “[f]urther, in a dim way, his shocked and shuddering brain began to realize that his own calling was the cause of the horrors. If he called, the flocks came fearlessly, content with his pledge that all was well.” The bird then refused to assist the hunter in this devious game, and “the hunter, crouching moveless and expectant in his ambush, muttered an exclamation of surprise, and wondered if it could be possible that his incomparable decoy had reached an understanding of the treacherous game and refused to play it.” Despite having faced criticism from John Burroughs, Theodore Roosevelt, and others, Roberts continued to defend his belief in animal intelligence and rationality. In the preface to his 1907 collection of wild animal stories, *The Haunters of the Silences*, the author once again pointed to the many years of experience he had accumulated watching

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and observing the ways of animals and argued that anyone with such knowledge of animals—“keepers, trainers, hunters, and trappers”—would agree with his belief “that the actions of animals are governed not only by instinct, but also, in varying degree, by processes essentially akin to those of human reason.”

Seton and Roberts argued that although animals were not able to express their intellectual and emotional sentiments through human language, these creatures had developed their own highly sophisticated forms of communication. Roberts believed that animals communicated in a kind of mystical way, through a primeval form of intuition that humans could not understand, “as if by some unwilling telepathic communication.” Seton’s characterization of animal communication was much more explicit. In the introduction to his story “Raggylug,” about a family of cottontail rabbits, the author declared that these creatures, rabbits that he had known personally, maintained a complex system of communication: “[t]ruly rabbits have no speech as we understand it, but they have a way of conveying ideas by a system of sounds, signs, scents, whisker-touches, movements, and example that answers the purpose of speech; and it must be remembered that though in telling this story I freely translate from rabbit into English, I repeat nothing that they did not say.” The author continued to elaborate this system of rabbit language. “Rabbits telegraph each other by thumping on the ground with their hind feet,” Seton explained. “A single thump means ‘look out’ or ‘freeze.’ A slow thump thump means ‘come.’ A fast thump thump means ‘danger;’ and a very fast thump thump thump means ‘run for dear life.’” Similarly, in describing the communication of wolves, the writer

51 Roberts, The Haunters of the Silences, viii.
53 Seton, Wild Animals I Have Known, 94.
54 Ibid., 106.
proposed the existence of what he called a “Wolf-telephone,” a system of communication through which wolves kept track of kin by leaving behind particular objects, markings in the ground, or scents at specified locations across their range that allowed other wolves to learn whether they were sick or hungry and in what direction they were traveling.55

Nature writers’ belief in animal intelligence and emotionality led them to characterize the thoughts and feelings of their nonhuman protagonists in humanized terms. Seton’s explanation of the lives of rabbits in “Raggylug,” for instance, used anthropomorphic concepts to convey a sense of the rabbits’ hardships. Raggylug’s mother, Molly, becomes caught in an unwanted relationship with another rabbit, who rapes and abuses her. “Poor little Molly was completely terrorized,” Seton lamented the existence of domestic violence in the animal world, “[t]he stranger made no attempt to kill her, but he made love to her, and because she hated him and tried to get away, he treated her shamefully…oh! What a miserable life it had become. How maddening to be thus helpless, to see his little mother daily beaten and torn.”56 The author claimed that such narratives were not efforts to humanize or anthropomorphize animals but were simply translations of the true facts of animals’ lives.

Reverend William J. Long, one of Seton and Roberts’s fellow nature writers, argued similarly that it was not, in fact, anthropomorphic to attribute rational thought and emotional capacity to animals. “If the reader find himself often wondering at the courage or gentleness or intelligence of these free folk of the wilderness,” Long wrote in the preface to his 1905 collection of animal stories, Northern Trails, “that need not trouble or puzzle him for an instant. He is not giving human traits to the beasts, but is simply

56 Seton, Wild Animals I Have Known, 131.
finding, as all do find who watch animals closely, many things which awaken a sympathetic response in his own heart.”57 Anticipating the future arguments of animal scholars by nearly one hundred years, Long claimed that humans could not help but interpret nature through one’s own frameworks of understanding and that the only way to truly understand the experience of other beings was through one’s own experience. This, according to the author, was not in any way problematic, since human and animal were kin and, consequently, using human terms to describe animals’ lives was entirely justifiable: “[l]ove and hate, fear and courage, joy and grief, pain and pleasure, want and satisfaction—these things, which make so large a part of life, are found in animals as well as in men, differing much in degree but not at all in kind from the same feelings in our own hearts; and we must measure them, if we are to understand them at all, by a common standard.”58

Nature writers thus accommodated Darwinian arguments into their defense against anthropomorphism by arguing that human and animal were kin and that, consequently, attributing human patterns of thought and emotion to nonhuman beings could not possibly be anthropomorphic. In The Kindred of the Wild, a telling title, Roberts argued that animals’ capacity for rational thought rendered the human-animal boundary unstable: “men were forced at last to accept the proposition that, within their varying limitations, animals can and do reason. As far, at least, as mental intelligence is concerned, the gulf dividing the lowest of the human species from the highest of the animals has in these latter days been reduced to a very narrow psychological fissure.”59

Seton was more explicit in his belief in human-animal kinship, declaring that “[n]o doubt

58 Ibid., xviii.
each different mind will find a moral to its taste, but I hope some will herein find emphasized a moral as old as Scripture—we and the beasts are kin. Man has nothing that the animals have not at least a vestige of, the animals have nothing that man does not in some degree share.”

Seton used such arguments in favour of extending rights to animals, though the nature writer never became particularly involved in the animal protection movement that was gaining momentum in North America at the time. In a story about wild partridges, the author made a case for animal rights by characterizing hunting as “lawful murder” and by depicting the death of the birds as unnecessary and tragic: “[a]nd Cuddy, failing again to strike her, raised his gun, and firing charge enough to kill a bear, he blew poor, brave, devoted Brownie into quivering, bloody rags.” Seton used this narrative occasion to contemplate the rights of animals in society more generally, reflecting, “[h]ave the wild things no moral or legal rights? What right has man to inflict such long and fearful agony on a fellow-creature, simply because that creature does not speak his language?” Seton’s was an instrumentalist interpretation of animal rights, however. As the nature writer admitted, he desired to protect animals from cruelty and death not just for their own sake, but for the sake of human recreation and enjoyment.

Nature writers’ belief in human-animal kinship also emerged in narrative moments of profound emotional identification between human and animal. Roberts’s desire to represent the distinctiveness and uniqueness of animals as individuals stemmed from having experienced such a moment of recognition in which he realized the extent of human-animal kinship. The author claimed that animal stories ought to examine “the

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60 Seton, *Wild Animals I Have Known*, 12.
psychology of animal life” by “looking deep into the eyes of certain of the four-footed kindred,” an exercise in intellectual and emotional identification that facilitated recognition of common kinship with nonhuman being. Roberts characterized these moments as deeply spiritual in nature, as means of discovering the distinctive personalities of animals “where we were blindly wont to predicate mere instinct and automatism.”

Seton, too, recalled one particular moment of profound identification with an animal, one that had changed his entire perspective on human-animal kinship. The author wrote of his decision to renounce hunting after the gaze of an animal, a lynx in particular, had struck him with feelings of deep remorse. “To this day I cannot forget the kitten-like wonder of those big, mild eyes, turned on me as I fired,” Seton reflected sentimentally. “He fell without a sound, and when I came up, he still gazed without a moan, without a sign of resentment, with nothing but pained surprise, which my conscience translated into: ‘So this is your love of the wild things.’”

These transformative moments expose the crucial ways in which human and animal defined one another; as Roberts and Seton desired to understand the thoughts and habits of the wild creatures around them, the animals themselves defined their human observers, shaping these authors’ awareness of themselves as the animals’ kin. These kinds of climactic experiences characterized Roberts’s and Seton’s fictional stories as well, as each author oftentimes wrote about moments of profound empathetic identification between human and animal characters, challenging the existence of rigid species boundaries. In the story “Krag, the Kootenay Ram,” Seton examines the life and death of one ram, Krag, in ways that demonstrate the complexity of animal social

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organization and the intimate nature of human-animal kinship. After describing Krag’s early years learning the ways of goats from his mother, Seton, in keeping with his conventional plot structure, describes the death of the ram’s mother at the hands of a human hunter, depicting the moment as a tragic event: “[a]nd the little one? He stood dumbly gazing at her. He did not understand. He only knew that he was cold and hungry now, and that his mother, to whom he had looked for everything—food, warmth, guidance, and sympathy—was so cold and still!”\textsuperscript{65} The moment of identification occurs between Krag and the hunter who killed his mother, a man named Scotty. Although Scotty’s hunting companion Lee was struck by the vitality and individuality of Krag and decided not to shoot the ram, Scotty continued to seek the animal’s death. Many hunters over the years tried but failed to kill the creature, yet Scotty was determined to do what no other hunter could and procure Krag’s antlers. “In the back of Scotty’s sinister gray eyes,” Seton described the villain’s motives, “was the fibre of dogged persistency that made his race the masters of the world.”\textsuperscript{66}

Scotty’s opportunity arrived while hunting in the mountains one day. The hunter and the ram stood gazing into each other’s eyes and, though Scotty shoots, he fails to kill Krag, which leads to a three month long pursuit. When one rested, slept, or ate, so did the other, the ram making sure to remain out of shooting range. This arduous pursuit created a deep sense of kinship between human and animal. “A singular feeling had grown up between the two,” Seton wrote. “The Ram became so used to the sleuth-hound on his track that he accepted him as an inevitable, almost a necessary evil; and one day, when Scotty rose and scanned the northern distance for the Ram, he heard the long snort far

\textsuperscript{65} Seton, \textit{The Lives of the Hunted}, 59.
behind, and turning, he saw old Krag impatiently waiting.”

Scotty eventually devises a plan to kill Krag by creating a cloth dummy of himself to confuse the animal, and, after killing the ram, experiences a range of emotions, from guilt to pride: “his lips uttered only a torrent of horrid blasphemies, his one emotional outburst. A long silence; then, ‘I’d give it back to him if I could.’ Then he returned to the horns, and over him came the wild, inhuman lusting for his victim’s body that he had heard his comrades speak of, but had never before understood.”

Yet the hunter’s victory was not so straightforward, and his act of violence took its toll on Scotty’s mind and body. As he lugged his trophy home, Seton notes, the man had become “old, emaciated, grizzled, and haggard.” When asked about the experience years later, Scotty revealed the profound ways in which his encounter with the animal had affected him: “‘He’s been a-gittin’ back at me these four years. He broke me down on that trip. He’s made an old man o’ me. He’s left me half luny. He’s sucking my life out now. But he ain’t through with me yet. Thar’s more o’ him round than that head.’”

Scotty continued to describe how he could hear Krag’s spirit when the wind blew, particularly when Chinooks blew down the mountain. The hunter’s premonition that the Ram was not yet finished seeking revenge proved true, as one day a furious Chinook wind crushed Scotty’s shanty, the only surviving remnant the head of the Ram. “Old Scotty is forgotten,” Seton concluded, “but the Ram’s head hangs enshrined on a palace wall to-day, a treasure among kingly treasures; and men, when they gaze on those

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67 Ibid., 91.
68 Ibid., 98.
69 Ibid., 98.
70 Ibid., 101.
marvelous horns, still talk of the glorious Gunder Ram.”71 The hunter had come to recognize the individuality of the ram over the course of his three month long pursuit, but Scotty’s decision to kill the creature that had become kin also brought about his own mental, emotional, and physical death, rendering his supposed victory over the animal ambiguous.

A more profound moment of identification in which human hunter recognizes kinship with wild animals occurs in Seton’s novel The Trail of the Sandhill Stag. In this story, the hunter, a boy name Yan, is struck by the beauty of wild animals and by their ability to return his gaze: “They trotted to a bank fifty yards away and then turned to gaze at him. How they did seem to look with their great ears! How they spell-bound him by the soft gaze that he felt rather than saw.”72 Despite this recognition of animal being, Yan continues to hunt, and the following summer the boy decides to pursue the Sandhill Stag, a deer known for his size and stature. “So grand, so charged with life,” Yan reflected upon spotting the animal for the first time. “He seemed a precious, sacred thing—a king, fur-robed and duly crowned. To think of shooting now as he lay unconscious, resting, seemed an awful crime.”73 Still, the boy cannot overcome his desire to kill the ram. But as Yan resolves to shoot, the stag turns and gazes deep into the hunter’s soul: “‘Darest thou slay me?’ said an uncrowned, unarmed king once, as his eyes fell upon the assassin’s knife, and in that clear, calm gaze the murderer quailed and cowed. So trembled Yan, but he knew it was only stag-fever.”74 Yan tries shooting the animal but

71 Ibid., 104.
73 Ibid., 44.
74 Ibid., 46.
fails to strike the stag and, after this failed attempt, spends time with an indigenous hunter named Chaska, who teaches him the skills of woodcraft.

The boy becomes increasingly ambivalent toward hunting, however. Yan feels a deep sense of guilt and revulsion after witnessing his friend Duff kill a deer and is unable to watch Duff disassemble the animal. Still, Yan remains determined to kill the Sandhill Stag. When the hunter finally encounters the stag, he is torn between his vivid memories of dying animals, wounded by hunters like himself, and his lust to kill the creature. As the boy and the animal “gazed into each other’s eyes—and hearts,” Yan realizes that the deer is his kin. All “thoughts of murder” dissipated as the boy contemplates this apparent collapse of boundaries between human and animal. Upon this epiphany, Yan gazes into the stag’s eyes and addresses the animal as his brother, recognizing that, while unable to communicate through human language, he could understand the stag’s thoughts and feelings. The young hunter resolves never to harm wild animals and to use his superior strength and intellect—for although he sees the stag as his brother, Yan also describes himself as “the elder and stronger”—to protect such creatures from harm. Seton uses wolf imagery to describe this renunciation of violence in Yan’s exclamation to the stag that never again would he stalk wildlife “with the wild wolf rampant in my heart,” thus indicating the mutual constitution of humans and animals in moments of death.75

Narrative moments of animal death were therefore intended to evoke sympathetic identification between human and animal. Charles Roberts’s short story “The Kill,” for instance, tells the story of a moose hunt, written from the animal’s perspective. The reader is encouraged to identify with the moose as a fellow sentient, thinking, and feeling being, as opposed to the human hunters that are constructed as callous and bloodthirsty.

75 Ibid., 92.
Shared emotionality, then, overshadows shared humanity. Roberts depicts the hunt in careful detail, describing the moose’s panic at sensing the hunters, his pain upon being wounded, and his desperate struggle to escape the cruel guns of the humans. The conclusion of the story is abrupt and ambiguous; the moose, of course, dies, which highlights human cruelty. The greed and viciousness of humans is magnified as the animal is quickly instrumentalized at the moment of his death, physically and metaphorically fragmented, transformed from a thinking and feeling creature to a pile of objects, “a mere heap of hide and antlers” as the hunter “drew his knife across the outstretched throat.”

Nature writers’ efforts to deconstruct the species boundary between human and animal were also evident in their animalization of human characters. This theme was particularly prominent in Roberts’s stories, and functioned to collapse further the human-animal boundary. Roberts often argued that humans, too, were driven by animalistic instincts. In a story called “The Watchers of the Trail,” Roberts reverses the typical paradigm of hunter and prey, both humanizing animals and animalizing humans. The tale describes a group of deer stalking a lumberman, who begins to feel uneasy at the sensation of being observed and feels, instinctively, that something is amiss, that “it was some peril that had thus awakened him.” The man realizes that a doe is watching him, and that a panther is in turn watching the doe. Feeling a sense of kinship with the deer, he decides to kill the panther despite his ethical objection to killing wild animals. In other stories, too, Roberts animalized human characters, particularly by emphasizing their non-linguistic sensory aptitude; one fictional trapper, for instance “was a better hunting

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77 Ibid., 266.
animal than the best of them,” would could “hear as well as the listening moose” and “see as far as the lynx.” The author thus appealed to characteristics shared between human and animal that moved beyond the realm of language as a means of demarcating the bonds of kinship.

The animalization of human characters was perhaps most striking in Roberts’s 1902 novel entitled The Heart of the Ancient Wood, a narrative about a woman named Kirstie who moves out into the wilderness with her daughter, Miranda. From a young age Miranda feels a special connection to the wild animals around her, and the animals in turn “came to know Miranda as a creature in some way not quite alien to themselves. They knew that she often saw them when her mother’s eyes could not.” Miranda forms a particularly strong bond with a bear named Kroof, who becomes a surrogate mother for the girl following the death of the bear’s cub. Roberts uses this relationship to problematize human-animal difference, describing, for instance, Kroof’s maternal instincts after protecting Miranda from a wildcat: “[w]hen he was gone Kroof lay down on her side and gently coaxed Miranda against her body. Her bereaved heart went out to the child. Her swollen teats, too, were hotly aching, and she had a kind of hope that Miranda would ease that hurt.” The other creatures of the forest, too, detect a mysterious animalistic quality to Miranda. One panther “recognized some sort of power and prerogative in Miranda,” other animals “respected her but did not trust her,” and Kirstie confessed to the girl that she had always been different from other humans: “you were a queer baby—more a fairy or a wild thing than a human youngster—before ever

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78 Roberts, The Feet of the Furtive, 148.
80 Ibid., 83.
you came to the clearing; and all the wild things seem to think you’re one of themselves; and you see what other folks can’t see.”

Miranda continued to identify with animals, but her human naivety of the ways of wildlife often surfaced. Although, as Roberts explains, “her sympathies were not with her own kind, but with the wild and silent folk who know not the sweetness of laughter,” Miranda oftentimes humanized her animal companions and failed to understand them as animals. After discovering that Kroof had killed a rabbit, Miranda punishes the bear for this supposed act of violence. Kroof did not understand what she had done to deserve reproach, while Miranda could not see that predation and death were inherent features of animal life. Because of her inability to understand the vicious struggle for survival that underpinned animal existence, Miranda cannot become a true part of nature. Miranda could only see animals anthropomorphically, as “gentle people living for the most part in a voiceless amity,” Roberts writes. “Her seeing eyes quite failed to see the unceasing tragedy of the stillness. She did not guess that the furtive folk, whom she watched about their business, went always with fear at their side and death lying in wait at every turn. She little dreamed that, for most of them, the very price of life itself was the ceaseless extinguishing of life.”

Miranda eventually becomes friends with a human, a man named Dave, who teaches her that nature is not the peaceable kingdom of kindreds that she had imagined. Miranda loathes Dave’s love for hunting and trapping, and, while she tries to teach him that killing animals is wrong, the male hunter in turn exposes the woman’s ignorance of nature. After the two witness a lynx prey upon another animal, Dave explains to a

81 Ibid., 82, 98, 185.
82 Ibid., 146.
83 Ibid., 124.
horrified Miranda that predation, combat, and death are an inherent part of animals’ lives. Miranda’s failure to understand this finally and irrevocably constitutes her humanity, excluding her from the world of animals; as Dave reflects, “Miranda was now all human, and could never quite go back to her mystic and uncanny wildness, her preference for the speechless, furry kin over her own warm, human mind.” In her quest to understand the thoughts and behaviours of animals, then, Miranda discovers more about herself, her animal kindred teaching her more about her own humanity than any other human had thus been able.

**Wild and Domestic: Human Dominance and the Constitution of Animals**

If Roberts’s and Seton’s nature stories illustrated the ways in which animals defined humans, as Miranda’s tale exemplifies, the narratives also demonstrated the ways in which humans defined animals. Although Seton and Roberts desired to avoid the essentializing thrust of modernity, emphasizing the individuality of animals rather than their shared traits as members of species, the nature writers used their own essentialist framework to constitute the nonhuman beings around them, generalizing animals as belonging to one of two distinct categories—wild or domestic—that were defined in reference to servitude and human dominance. Moreover, despite their empathetic efforts to position human and animal as kin, these authors also characterized humans as the superior being within the human-animal relationship, as master over beast, both wild and domestic. In their belief that human and animal could not coexist in any symbiotic way and in their sanction of human superiority, realistic wild animal stories reiterated the logic of expansionist settler colonialism in Canada, defining not just their authors as masterful conquerors but also legitimizing the dominion as a powerful nation and empire.

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84 Ibid., 256.
A recurring theme in realistic wild animal stories, then, appealed to the supposedly essential differences between animals considered domestic and those perceived as inherently wild. Roberts in particular told stories of domesticated farm animals who found themselves lost in the wilderness and were forced to rely on their own intelligence and instincts for survival without the protection of human captors, faced with the viciousness of wild nature. In a narrative called “The Alien of the Wild,” for instance, Roberts describes the plight of a cow and her calf who strayed from their farm and became lost in the wilderness. The mother cow died the death of a wild animal, ‘hunted’ by a local indigenous man. The calf, emotionally scarred by his mother’s death, had to become self-reliant in a forest full of wild creatures and, after fighting with several animals and experiencing deep confusion over the lack of mating partners of his own kind in the wild, became increasingly angry, miserable, and lonely. After spotting a group of humans, the bull offers himself as a willing captive, desiring to return to domesticity. But the animal had been too long in the wilderness to readjust to life on the farm. After trying to attack humans as well as farm animals, the farmer shoots and kills the bull. “‘The woods they wa’n’t no place fer you, so ye had to quit ‘em,’” the farmer lamented to the dead cow, contemplating the inability of the animal to be either essentially domestic or wild. “‘But they spiled y’ou fer the habitations o’ man. It’s a born stranger an alien you was, an’ there wa’n’t no place fer ye neither here nor there!’”

Ironically, then, the bull dies as a wild creature—staring down the gun of a human—yet his death results from an inborn, unavoidable inability to live as a wild animal.

Roberts also plays with the boundary between wilderness and civilization in a tale called “The Passing of the Black Whelps,” which describes a supposedly unnatural union.

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between a wild animal and a domestic animal that could only end in tragedy. In this story, a female dog and a male wolf, each alienated from its natural habitat, give birth to a litter of dog-wolf hybrids, who grow to become strong, intelligent, and powerful animals. The parents recognize the mastery of human beings, but their pups, mixtures of wilderness and domesticity, had no understanding of the laws of nature or of their proper place in the hierarchy of beings. Upon encountering a woodsman, the pups desired to attack the human. Their mother, however, recognized a deep sense of domesticity, docility, and servitude within her, sensing that the man was, in fact, her true master. Struck by the woodsman’s “voice of command,” the dog begins to see her pups as transgressions of nature, baring her fangs and turning upon them. “She was no longer a wolf, but a dog,” Roberts described the animal’s final acceptance of her inner essence as domesticated being, “and there was her master—not her old master, but such a one as he had been. At his side, fighting his foes, was her place.”86 The dog joined the human in the struggle against her own pups, as did her wolf mate. The pups killed their mother, the father escaped, and the woodsman killed the murderous hybrids. The animals’ effort to collapse the boundary between wilderness and civilization failed, their union becoming a tragic and deadly aberration of nature.

Nature writers also produced animals as essentially wild or essentially domestic by penning tales of wild animals forced to exist in domesticity, often due to humans’ cruel attempts at controlling animals’ lives, the animal protagonists typically dying due to an inherent inability to survive within the confines of captivity. A common theme in Charles G.D. Roberts’s wild animal stories, then, is the forced encounter between wild animals and human civilization, most often brought about by humans’ desire to raise such

86 Ibid., 344-5.
animals in captivity for their own benefit and pleasure. In a story called “The Homesickness of Kehonka,” the author tells the tale of a duck who is captured by a farmer and kept in captivity, his clipped wings signifying the cruelty and arrogance of human efforts to control the natural instincts of animals. Kehonka could not adapt to life in captivity and, after many failed attempts to join kindred flocks of birds migrating overhead, the bird became heartbroken “His instinct for other scenes and another fellowship had been too little tangible to move him to the snapping of established ties,” Roberts described the bird’s growing desire to embrace his inner wild spirit. “Now, all his desires at once took concrete form. It was his, it belonged to himself—that strong, free flight, that calling through the sky, that voyaging northward to secret nesting places…Kehonka’s heart was near bursting with his desire.”87 But the bird could not fly, and died a lonely, pathetic death.

“The Return to the Trails” tells the story of a black bear who is captured by humans and sold to a traveling circus, where the animal is trained to perform tricks. “He had no understanding of the fierce restlessness, the vague longing, which from time to time, and especially when the autumn frosts begin to nip and tingle, would take possession of him, moving him almost to hatred of even his special friends, the manager and the clown,” Roberts wrote of the bear’s effort to understand the clash between his captive state and his yearning for freedom. “He knew only that something, in the air and in his blood, was calling him to his own.”88 The bear managed to escape from the circus and return to his home in the forest. But, the author laments, the animal had been removed from the wild for so long that he had forgotten how to be a bear. The animal did

not know how to prepare himself for winter hibernation and, consequently, was unable to adapt to life in the wilderness. Roberts characterized nature as a harsh and unforgiving environment, unwilling to show mercy to the “alien” bear so cruelly removed from his forest by brash humans. Nature refused to welcome the animal that had been tainted by experience in the world of humans, forcing the animal to return to civilization, the only world he had ever really known. After spotting some lumbermen, people he perceived as kin, the bear began to make his way back to domestic life. The men, however, grew afraid of the approaching bear and killed him, realizing after the fact that the creature was in fact the much loved escaped circus bear.⁸⁹

A similar story called “The Summons of the North” told the tale of a polar bear captured by human hunters after the men had killed the bear’s mother. Despite the humans’ best efforts to care for the animal, and although the bear became healthy and strong, none of the hunters “could penetrate his impregnable reserve,” and the men decided to place the bear in a zoo, where he was forced to life a life that “almost broke his spirit by its cramped monotony…the staring, grinning crowds which passed endlessly before the bars of his cage filled him with a weary rage; and day by day a fiercer homesickness clutched at his heart.”⁹⁰ The polar bear could not survive this fate, becoming more and more desolate each day. One zookeeper understood that the animal’s malaise stemmed from homesickness; during a fierce snowstorm, the bear finally emerged from his cage and rolled in the snow, the memory of which killed him. The bear, according to the zookeeper, had died of a broken heart, aware of the northern wind blowing. “To his heart it was the summons of the north,” Roberts described the captive

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animal’s death, “and suddenly his heart answered. He stood still, with a strange bewilderment in his eyes, as if transfixed by some kind of tremendous shock. Then he swayed on his legs; and sank in a lifeless heap by the drifted brink of his pool.”

Ernest Thompson Seton, too, told stories of wild animals who found themselves entangled within the civilized world of humans, which inevitably had negative consequences. In “Johnny Bear” the author recalls the life of a bear cub, noted for his disobedient and stubborn ways. Johnny’s mother Grumpy, a negligent bear who fails to discipline her son, eventually abandons the cub, who begins to rely on the kitchen staff of a nearby lodge. The once adventurous cub becomes forlorn and, though, Norah, one of the hotel workers, had “spanked him into an exceedingly well behaved little Bear,” the animal continued to deteriorate in his captive state.

Johnny lost his natural curiosity for life—“finally not the most exciting noises or scenes around him could stir up his old fondness for seeing what was going on”—and was unable to exist in captivity. Seton’s story about a coyote named Tito tells a similar tale, though remarkably this particular narrative ends happily. Tito is captured by humans as a young coyote pup and learns the wily ways of humans, with their traps and their poison, in her captive state. The animal manages to escape, rejoin the coyote world, and raise a family. The knowledge Tito gained from her close proximity with humans served her well in escaping the guns and traps of local wolvers: “[t]hey have learned the deadly secrets of traps and poisons, they know how to baffle the gunner and Hound, they have matched their wits with the hunter’s

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91 Ibid., 30.
wits. They have learned how to prosper in a land of man-made plenty, in spite of the worst that man can do, and it was Tito that taught them how.\textsuperscript{93}

Seton also told an allegedly true story of a wolf who, by choice, lived within the domestic world of human civilization. “The Winnipeg Wolf” tells the tale of le garou, as the animal was known locally, who lived with a saloon-keeper in the middle of Winnipeg after a local trapper killed the pup’s parents and siblings, and who was kept at the end of a chain for saloon patrons. “His life was as hard as it could be,” Seton lamented, “[t]here was but one gleam of gentleness in it all, and that was the friendship that grew up between himself and Little Jim, the son of the saloon-keeper.”\textsuperscript{94} Sadly, Little Jim died, and after the wolf howled unceasingly in mourning, the boy’s father set him free. Le garou, however, chose to live in the city rather than in the surrounding wilderness, despite the dangers and hazards posed by urban existence. “His only path was the warpath,” Seton described the animal’s combative relationship with Winnipeg residents who desired his death, “and all the world his foes.”\textsuperscript{95} But the wolf, of course, could not continue to lead such an unnatural life as a wild animal in domestic space. After le garou killed some local dogs, city inhabitants gathered to seek the animal’s death and chased him down with their guns and their packs of dogs, finally shooting and killing the creature. The narrator is ultimately unable to understand the wolf’s decision to live a life of peril in a domestic environment rather than embrace his natural wild, wolffish ways and seek out wilderness. “Who can look into the mind of the Wolf?” Seton wondered. “Who

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 351.
\textsuperscript{94} Seton, Animal Heroes, 296.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 310.
can show us his wellspring of motive? Why should he still cling to a place of endless tribulation?"  

The viciousness of nature is rendered even more pathetic when humans are involved in the deaths of animals. Seton and Roberts often depicted human beings as cruel figures who disrupt the natural processes of the forest and cause unnecessary suffering to animals. In one of Roberts’s stories, for instance, a hunter kills a doe so that his sick father can eat venison meat, leaving the doe’s baby fawn alone in the wilderness. The author renders the fawn’s life short and vicious, killed by an animal predator: “[t]he cry was feeble, but there were keen ears in the forest to catch it. There came a stealthy crackling in the bushes, and the fawn struggled to its feet with a glad expectation. Two green eyes, close to the ground, floated near. There was a pounce, a scuffle—and then the soft, fierce whispering sound of a wildcat satisfying itself with blood.” While depicting nature as a site of vicious struggle and competition for survival, Roberts also positions the death of the fawn all the more regrettable because of the human hunter’s interference in the lives of wild animals. Had the human not been so cruel as to kill the doe, readers are led to believe, the fawn would have led a happy life. Although the hunter’s father receives new life and health by consuming the dead mother, renewal is not possible for the fawn.

Seton’s and Roberts’s sympathetic narratives of wild animals trapped in captivity or otherwise killed by callous hunters were genuine efforts to criticize the arrogance of human intervention into animals’ lives. But their chastisement of animal exploitation did not extend to those creatures considered domestic. Despite their efforts to understand the

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96 Ibid., 320.
individuality of animals and avoid generalization based on species, these authors’ stories defined nonhuman beings in essentialized terms, as either wild or domestic. And as they anthropomorphically constituted categories of animal existence, they also sanctioned particular ways of encountering animals, legitimizing the exploitation and death of domestic creatures while condemning the killing of wild animals. Realistic wild animal stories thus had very real consequences, a literal matter of life and death for the real-world creatures whose treatment at the hands of humans was shaped by the authors’ imaginings of animal death.

Wild animal stories also reflected themes of human mastery over animal. Recall Charles Roberts’s novel *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, the story in which a young, animalistic woman named Miranda develops an intimate connection with the nonhuman beings with whom she lives. At the conclusion of the story, Kroof, Miranda’s bear companion, in a reversal of typical hunting narratives, stalks and attacks Miranda’s friend Dave. As Dave seeks refuge in a tree, he becomes certain of his impending death. Miranda must then choose who to save, her animal companion or her human companion, which constitutes the final conflict between her inner animality and her humanity. Miranda kills the bear and confirms her place in the world of humanity, affirming the bonds of human kinship over identification with animals. Miranda’s inability to understand the reality of violence and death in animal nature and her failure to overcome the abyss between human and animal, then, reiterates conventional notions of species difference. “The girl turned suddenly, with a sob, and caught hold of him, and hid her face in his breast,” Roberts describes Miranda’s final rejection of her animalistic
“Oh Dave!” she cried, in a piteous voice, ‘take mother and me away from this place; I don’t want to live at the clearing any more.’”

Many animal protagonists recognize a distinctive authority and power in the speech and actions of human characters. In Roberts’s “The King of the Mamozekel,” for instance, the most valuable lesson a young moose learns is to avoid humans, more powerful beings than animals: “[h]e learned to shun man,—not with fear, indeed, for he never learned to fear anything except bears,—but with aversion, and a certain half-disdainful prudence. It was as if he came to recognize in man the presence of powers which he was not anxious to put to trial, lest he should be forced to doubt his own supremacy.” Other wild animal characters, too, recognize the inherent superiority of human over animal. One bear detects “an inexplicable mastery” in the voice of a woodsman, realizing the man had “a master spirit,” and must rely on the man’s wit and cunning for his life in the midst of a forest fire. In these and other tales, Roberts suggests that although human and animal may be kin, they are not equal. Humans still occupied a superior position in the hierarchy of being, and all lesser, inferior creatures recognized human intelligence and might. Nature writers positioned human intrusion into wilderness and mastery over animal as an inevitable consequence of agricultural settlement. As such, Roberts and Seton oftentimes widened the abyss between human and animal they so wished to deconstruct.

**Conclusion**

Literary scholars have referred to the realistic wild animal story as the quintessential genre of Canadian literature. Whereas nature writers in other parts of the

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100 Roberts, *The Feet of the Furtive*, 3, 19.
Anglo-American world used animal characters as a way of reiterating human mastery and allegorizing hierarchical social relations, critics have suggested, Canadian texts were distinctive in their effort to understand animals from the creatures’ own points of view and in their attempt to foster sentimental identification with nonhuman others. Margaret Atwood has argued that the stories of Seton and Roberts constitute a distinctive genre that “provides a key to an important facet of the Canadian psyche.” The particular Canadianness of the stories, according to Atwood, derives from their discussions of suffering, victimhood, and survival. Whereas animals in British narratives are essentially human characters symbolic of social hierarchies, and while animals in American texts exist as foils by which humans prove their status as masterful conquerors, animals in Canadian stories invoke empathetic identification between human reader and animal character.

Atwood argues that the key to Roberts’s and Seton’s stories is their perspective from the animals’ point of view, that Canadian stories are about animals “being killed” and not about “people killing animals.” Pointing out that animals in Canadian stories are always victims, Atwood further suggests that readers identify with the animal as fellow suffering victim. “Their identification with animals is the expression of a deep-seated cultural fear,” she writes in an effort to connect themes of animal victimization with threats to national cultural survival. “The animals, as Seton says, are us. And for the

Canadian animal, bare survival is the main aim in life, failure as an individual is inevitable, and extinction as a species is a distinct possibility.”

Atwood’s emphasis on human-animal identification in Canadian nature writing is certainly present in the themes of kinship and companionship characteristic of Seton’s and Roberts’s stories. These nature writers believed that animals were capable of thinking rationally and of feeling emotions, and argued that their characterizations of animals could not possibly be anthropocentric considering human and animal were in fact kin. The authors hoped their readers would identify with their animal characters, particularly in their deaths, challenging conventional boundaries between human and animal and condemning human cruelty in disrupting the lives of wild animals.

But alternative readings of these stories problematize Atwood’s assertion that identification between human and animal as fellow suffering victim constitutes the particular Canadianness of the stories. The themes of human dominance and mastery that existed alongside sentimental notions of kinship and empathy contradict Atwood’s survival thesis, as do the observations of scholars such as Nick Mount, Manina Jones, and Brian Johnson, who offer an alternative reading of Seton’s and Roberts’s efforts to create a distinctly Canadian literature.\(^{105}\) In *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York*, Nick Mount argues that animal stories defined Canada by appealing to the dominion’s regional particularities as depicted in the narratives’ settings. Defining this late nineteenth century preoccupation with fusing a nascent Canadian identity to the landscape a kind of northern topocentrism, Mount characterizes Canadian authors’ nationalism as particularly

\(^{104}\) *Ibid.*, 220.

\(^{105}\) Moreover, Atwood’s reading of concerns over national cultural survival is likely more reflective of her own historical context, a time in which Canadian scholars and intellectuals increasingly worried about the continued existence of Canadian cultural forms amidst the relentless expansion of American culture northward, than it is indicative of Seton’s and Roberts’s concerns over national distinctiveness.
“virulent” in form, comprised of distinctive, racist myths that sought to define northern races as “robust, self-reliant, and vigorously moral,” while simultaneously denigrating southern races as “weak, effeminate, and immoral.” Mount’s observations suggest that Atwood’s focus on the shared bond between human and animal as fellow suffering victim obscures a more troubling reading of animal stories, one that speaks to themes of race and empire.

Manina Jones and Brian Johnson suggest that realistic wild animal stories embodied Canadian authors’ anxieties over the instability of identity categories in a settler-colonial context. In her analysis of Ernest Thompson Seton’s *Wild Animals I Have Known*, Jones suggests that although Seton endorses “the radical possibility of discursive agency within nature,” that is, the potential of animals to speak back to humans, the nature writer circumscribes this agency and appropriates animal being in an “anxious expression of colonial guilt.” Jones argues that Seton’s effort to identify with animal and to allow animals authorial power is ultimately overshadowed by his conflation of animal speech and Aboriginal self-expression and by his conviction that both animals and First Nations were inevitably doomed to extinction. Seton’s efforts to record the lives of animals, Jones reflects, constituted an act of salvage ethnography, a means of preserving in literary form aspects of dying beings, both Aboriginal and animal. As such, these tales contributed to “the dominant narrative of an advanced and advancing cultural frontier that supersedes indigenous populations, both animal and human, even as his conservationist

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rhetoric laments this advance.”¹⁰⁸ Brian Johnson similarly emphasizes the intimate associations between “nationalist discourses of indigenization” and “conservationist discourses of animal-human ‘kinship,’” observing that Seton’s and Roberts’s efforts to deconstruct species boundaries signified racialized fantasies of indigenization.¹⁰⁹

Identification and kinship between human and animal, then, existed alongside themes of mastery and dominance. And as the observations of Mount, Jones, and Johnson suggest, these connotations of human mastery were not simple reiterations of human dominance over animal but appealed to broader processes of colonialism in post-Confederation Canada. Identification with animal did not preclude masterful assertions of nation and empire that entailed human dominance over animal and settler power over indigenous communities. Animal death allowed Canadians to empathize with wildlife, to foster appreciation for animal individuality and human-animal kinship, but it also enabled them to define their own sense of self through killing animals; and, as Cary Wolfe reminds us, nodding to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, humans’ use of animals to define subjective identities is inevitably colonial.¹¹⁰ The following chapter examines the culture of big game hunting in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada, exploring more fully the connection between individual acts of self-definition through killing animals and national and imperial acts of definition, analyzing the ways in which sportsmen identified with wildlife and regretted animal extinction while also endorsing the killing of wildlife as emblematic of both individual and national virility and power.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 145.
2: Chasing Animal Death: Sport Hunting, Masculinity, and Empire

The culture of big game hunting in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada embodied many of the same tensions between sympathy and mastery contained within realistic wild animal stories. Nature writers desired to empathize with wild creatures as kin, as fellow thinking and feeling beings, but their implicit sanction of human dominance, and their acceptance of the inevitability of colonial expansion, rendered such moments of identification deeply ambiguous. These writers did not simply relate to wildlife as fellow suffering victims; they also used animals to help define themselves as masterful conquerors of beast and wilderness. This chapter further examines the ways in which turn-of-the-century Canadians both identified with animals and asserted dominance over animals, analyzing how the culture of big game hunting in particular contributed to visions of Canada as powerful nation and empire in the decades following Confederation. Like nature writers, sport hunters identified with their animal prey; they spoke to and with nonhuman beings, and they expressed a deep sense of remorse at the deaths of both individual animals and entire species of animals. But they also killed animals, and they took great pride in doing so. In order to reconcile their regret over animal death with their continued practices of killing, Canadian sportsmen emphasized their love for animals and their adherence to strict codes of sportsmanship. Such gestures at legitimizing killing wildlife for sport also helped to define hunters as agents of empire and as manly defenders of the nation’s virility.
This chapter uses the autobiographical narratives of sport hunters as well as popular hunting and fishing magazines to study the practices and meanings of killing wild animals for sport in Victorian Canada. The authors of such texts were nearly always elite men of Anglo-Canadian, British, or American heritage who published books outlining their experiences hunting wild game in the Canadian wilderness. Authors Adam Moore and Arthur Bryan Williams, for instance, were game wardens and guides in British Columbia, while narrator William Temple Hornaday was a sportsman, naturalist, and taxidermist from the United States who spent extensive amounts of time hunting in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Frederick Selous, who authored *Recent HuntingTrips in British North America*, was a world-renowned big game hunter from England who traveled the British Empire in search of game. These sportsmen’s texts describe excursions that took place across the vast expanse of the new dominion, from the forests of the Atlantic Provinces, to the flat soils of the prairies, to the sub-arctic plains of the northern territories, to the mountains of British Columbia.

Many hunters began their narratives by declaring their knowledge and authority in matters of woodcraft, introducing their stories by describing the years of experience they had accumulated in the wilderness of North America. In the preface to *With Rod and Gun in Canada*, for instance, hunter Phil Moore boasted of his skills and prowess in the ways of hunting big game. “I have helped to kill grizzly and black bear, mountain lion, sheep, and goats,” Moore bragged, “I traveled north to Sitka and south to Chihuahua, and thence east to Nova Scotia. I spent ten days under water. I shot seals along the Nova Scotia coast from a motor-boat. I shot caribou near Moose Factory on Hudson Bay. Then I joined the gold rush into Porcupine. The next four years I was carried from coast to coast in
These kinds of claims to expertise enabled hunter-authors to present their texts as objective, truthful depictions of their adventures in the wilderness. Sportsmen argued that their texts were authentic representations of the natural world that allegedly provided readers access to the Canadian wilderness and its nonhuman inhabitants. In constructing their texts as the sincere recollections of seasoned sportsmen, then, these authors hoped to educate as well as to entertain their readership.

A few sportsmen established their integrity and believability as authors by candidly admitting their naiveté and inexperience in matters related to big game hunting and wilderness survival. As one author confessed, “I knew that I was the greenest of the green. I was the tenderest tender-foot that ever got away from home and mother.” By disclosing one’s ignorance in the field of animal behaviour and one’s lack of skill in the sport of hunting, authors could situate their texts as didactic manuals in the ways of woodcraft. As the novice sportsman-author learned from his mistakes and misconceptions and from the knowledge of his more qualified guides and companions, so too could readers become proficient in the techniques of killing wild animals. Moreover, if an author was willing to risk potential embarrassment by admitting his ignorance, the stories and recollections contained within his text were all the more believable.

Whether humble or boastful, novice or veteran, hunters’ texts shared a common narrative structure and discussed similar themes. After establishing their legitimacy as authors, sportsmen described their preparations for the adventure such as packing and organizing equipment, introduced their guides and companions, and recalled the journey.

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2 Stanley Washburn, Trails, Trappers, and Tender-feet in the New Empire of Western Canada (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1913): 22.
they had taken into the heart of some remote forest. Many authors described having felt a sense of awe in sighting an animal for the first time and wrote extensively on the nobility and beauty of the creature. Still, the hunter took his shot and, given the state of rifle technology in the nineteenth century, most often failed to kill the animal instantly. Instead he wounded his prey, which forced him to pursue the creature through the wilderness. The author’s knowledge of local environments and animal behaviour was consequently tested as he followed the injured animal’s tracks. After providing enough dramatic description of the chase to build narrative tension, the sportsman resolved the story by revealing whether he indeed managed to kill the animal or whether his prey escaped. A few animals did secure their freedom, though most, of course, died at the hands of the hunter. The moment of death sometimes had a profound emotional effect on sportsmen, many of whom recounted the experience with vivid and sentimental language. But despite the intensity of this climax, the animal was quickly objectified and fragmented as the hunter literally dismembered the creature’s body. The living being that only moments earlier inspired a sense of wonderment and reverence was instantly rendered, through its death, into a collection of abstract parts and objects to be consumed by the hunter.

**Modernity, Overcivilization, and the Sportsmen’s Code**

Sport hunting narratives appeared during a time of rapid social and cultural change. Faced with the unrelenting growth of urban-industrial society and modern technology in the second half of the nineteenth century, Canadian men and women began to fear the consequences of what they deemed the condition of overcivilization. That is, while appreciative of the material benefits and comforts of industrial innovation—
improved city transportation and sanitation services, new household appliances, labour saving production methods, for instance—many Canadians were anxious about the negative repercussions of such changes. Social commentators, journalists, local politicians, and reformers, amongst others, lamented the dangerous potential for urban-industrial society to become a site of opulence and excess, fearful that modern conveniences and comforts would produce a vulgar, immoral culture characterized by laziness, greed, and extravagance. Proper speech, etiquette, and comportment became increasingly important in guiding one’s behaviour in public spaces, and Victorians looked toward institutions such as schools and voluntary societies to cultivate virtuous and respectable citizens.  

But these social observers were not simply worried about the impact of technological existence upon individuals’ minds and behaviours, they were also concerned about how modern luxuries might affect the bodies of contemporary men and women, particularly those of the elite class who could afford to indulge in the ever growing opportunities for leisure and material consumption. Health officials as well as lay commentators bemoaned the seeming loss of physical strength and vigour amongst the middle and upper classes, blaming the mechanization of labour and recreation for producing a generation of chronically ill, weak, and frail individuals.

Victorians’ anxieties regarding the harmful consequences of overcivilization were also grounded in the belief that urban dwellers had become alienated from authentic wilderness. Social commentators promoted retreats into the forest as means through which one could escape the quick pace, the crowds, and the perils of urban life, as a way one could rejuvenate one’s technology-weary soul. This antimodernist rhetoric thus

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constructed nature as the antithesis of urban-industrial society and pointed to the pre-industrial past as a time in which men and women had lived more vigorous and wholesome lives. Urban, elite, Anglo-Canadian sport hunters in particular lamented the ways in which city existence robbed oneself of vital energy and taxed one’s mental and physical capacities, and touted big game hunting as an activity that enabled one to escape the drudgery of modern life and cultivate a spiritually fulfilling connection to nature. Hunting allowed fatigued urbanites to elude “the folly of millions of men, who are herded together like cattle, in tenements and dirty streets,” who “hurried on to old age and incompetence,” and permitted them to experience the “beauty and peaceful serenity” of the forest. The killing of wild animals, then, freed men from urban filth and decay as well as from stifling social conventions, rules, and regulations.

Hunters’ narratives were filled with condemnations of the supposed artificiality of urban life, with its relentless pace of development, its congestion and disease, and its materialistic excesses. Such lamentations appeared alongside exhortations to readers to discover for themselves the rejuvenating effects of camping and hunting upon one’s soul and body. One author complained that urban life was “surrounded by the absolutely

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5 Arthur Bryan Williams, *Game Trails in British Columbia: Big Game and Other Sport in the Wilds of British Columbia* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1925): 188.

artificial in real values,” arguing that modern women and men consumed too much food, wasted resources, and maintained shallow relationships with others, which produced a society of “ill-tempered and miserable” citizens. Even the occasional sojourn in the wilderness allowed one to discover how few material things were necessary for a more authentic, fulfilling existence.7 Hunting, according to these authors, did not simply heal one’s spirit. The sport was also capable of transforming the bodies of weak and sickly men who spent most of their time ensnared in the urban, corporate prison. “It shows what inherent strength the healthy human frame possesses,” one hunter reflected in the pages of Rod & Gun in Canada, “when men unaccustomed to such severe exercise and exposure can undergo what they do; they go into the woods with delicate white hands and soft bodies, and come out again in a fortnight brown, hale and hearty, able to eat like a horse and work like a Trojan.”8

Hunting in the Canadian wilderness thus enabled sportsmen to escape the confines of societal regulations and mores and to counter the softening of body and mind that accompanied urban ease and comfort. While pursuing big game, one particular hunter mused, one was able to attain a degree of freedom unavailable in civilized society. One’s mind became free, one’s heart opened to the wonders of nature, one’s soul liberated from the trifling matters of urban existence. “How petty one feels on rejoining the hysterical mob which hurries forth each morning from dwelling to office!” one author exclaimed in his condemnation of “the great machine called civilization.”9 Isolating oneself in the wilderness was thus a means by which men could counteract the polluting

7 Washburn, Trails, Trappers, and Tender-feet, 235.
9 Whitney, On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds, 3.
and gluttonizing effects of the city and prove their immunity from the corrupting consequences of modern luxuries. Hunting excursions were exercises in learning about the perils of wasteful materialism as much as they were exercises in acquiring the skills of woodcraft. Sportsmen boasted of the hardships they endured in the Canadian wilds and of their abilities to survive without modern conveniences such as water, electricity, or easy access to food. Wilderness, then, was a culturally produced space that embodied Victorians’ antimodernist anxieties over existence in an urban, technological society. Despite their ironic status as creatures of modernity penetrating a supposedly primeval and pristine wilderness, sportsmen did not see themselves as intrusive figures. They devised a host of rules, codes, and rituals that allowed them to define hunting as a gentlemanly leisure pursuit, and they espoused a sentimental love for animals that allowed them to minimize their role in animal death and to position themselves as benevolent guardians of wildlife.

Sportsmen’s attitude toward modernity was considerably more ambivalent than this antimodernist rhetoric acknowledged. Although hunting was constructed as an activity that enabled its practitioners to escape the routinization of urban life and to avoid the opulence of modern consumer society, it was also, paradoxically, perceived as a means of enhancing the productivity and efficiency of urban-industrial processes. With a few notable exceptions, hunters did not escape to the Canadian wilderness with the intention of permanently residing in nature; they believed that these dangerous, exhilarating excursions were necessary to refresh mind and body so that one could then return to city life better equipped to deal with the stresses and rapid pace of urban-industrial existence. After the hunt, according to sportsman James Alexander Hedley,
writing about an 1880s excursion into the Muskoka district of Ontario, “[e]ach goes back to his work, sunburned, toned-up, rejuvenated.” As a tonic for body and soul, one that refreshed men’s spirits so that they could function more efficiently and energetically at work, the antimodernist act of killing wild animals encouraged the reproduction of urban-industrial capitalism. American hunters John Dean Caton and W.B. Leffingwell, for instance, reflected on how businessmen who made a point of spending time in the wilderness each year never failed to return healthier, strengthened, and better able to contribute to the corporate world “than those who lack the energy or the inclination to leave their avocations and seek much-needed rest.”

Sportsmen did not, therefore, reject modern society altogether; they simply criticized those features of industrial development and urban growth that threatened their hegemony. These narrators, similar to other contemporary social commentators, praised the growth of capitalism, the production of goods and services, and the consumption of resources that accompanied modernity, but they opposed the ways in which the forces of development appeared to disrupt established social hierarchies. The arrival of racially diverse immigrants to power modern industrial factories, the increasing power of the working class in the face of capitalist exploitation, and the growing efforts of women to stake a claim in the public life of the city threatened elite, Anglo-Canadian men’s sense

10 James Alexander Hedley, Notes of a Hunting Trip with the Dwight-Wiman Club in the Muskoka District, Canada (Toronto: Trout & Todd Printers, 1884): 63. The symbolic power of hunting as a means of rejuvenation was also perceived as a way to promote national vigour; during World War I, for instance, social commentators fused individual, national, and racial regeneration, remarking that “[m]ore than ever after this war we must look forward to building up and maintaining a virile, hardy and intrepid race, and to do this we must not get too far away from the primitive conditions of life. The instinct of the hunter is one of the oldest and deepest of the race; there is, for the ordinary man, no stronger lure to the out-of-doors than this. In Canada, it will be possible, for a time, to satisfy this instinct.” See F.H. H. Williamson, “Game Preservation in Dominion Parks” Conservation of Fish, Birds and Game: Proceedings at a Meeting of the Committee, November 1 and 2, 1915 (Toronto: The Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1916): 136.

of power and security. Hunters saw the ability to kill wild animals as the power to master nature and, by extension, as a way of dominating subordinate groups in society more generally. The sport was thus not simply a retreat from contemporary existence but a means of adjusting to the social changes that accompanied industrial modernity. In their effort to maintain control over a rapidly changing society, sportsmen staked a claim to the forest as a space productive of hegemonic power. Wilderness was itself an ironic product of the very modernity sportsmen sought to resist.12

In order to retain their privileged status in a rapidly modernizing world, hunters took great pains to construct their sport as an exclusive activity. The ability to kill wild animals thus adopted profound social, cultural, and political meaning as an act of violence reserved for an elite few. Sportsmen developed elaborate cultural codes and rituals that dictated the proper means and ends of pursuing and shooting animal prey, denigrating those who would not or could not adhere to these strict regulations. The key principle of the sportsmen’s code was the notion of fair chase. Elite hunters conceived of their sport as a contract between hunter and hunted, arguing that the death of the animal was a legitimate reward for proving one’s superiority in the contest between man and beast—provided they had allowed their prey a fair chance to escape. “The true sportsman always gives the quarry a chance for its life,” hunter James Dickson explained in the pages of Rod & Gun in Canada in 1902. “The intelligence of the hunter is pitted against the intelligence of the hunted. The odds, if anything, are in favor of the latter. And when the stalk is brought to a successful issue, one feels he has earned the prize, and performed

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a feat of which he may justly feel proud.” The animal willingly gave its life, sportsmen argued, to a hunter who adhered to proper standards of conduct and who proved his physical and intellectual superiority over beast in an equal contest of might.

This code was not designed to make the killing of game animals easier but was in fact intended to make the sport more difficult. By imposing sanctions on practices that hindered animals’ ability to get away, such as corralling or yarding, the forced confinement of several animals in an enclosed area, hunters’ true ability to outwit and overpower an animal foe could be tested. A hunter could thus establish his membership in an exclusive group by refraining from using tactics that would give him an unfair advantage and by accepting artificially imposed measures of difficulty. British Columbia sport hunter and game warden Arthur Bryan Williams suggested that the difficulty of killing “only adds zest to the stalk and value to the trophy when obtained,” writing that the most cherished things in life were necessarily the hardest to obtain, that greater hardship added to the value of the trophy. “What trophy conjures up such pleasing memories as the one you secured at the cost of a severe struggle?” Williams concluded. Another sportsman reflected in a similar vein, “I am not sure that success in big game shooting, in retrospect, is so interesting as occasional failure. Finality kills imagination, and it is ever the finest head whose horns we never measure.”

Hunters’ effort to enhance the uncertainty of their sport is particularly notable when considered in its historical context. At a time when scientists and philosophers sought to render the natural world ordered and predictable, when social commentators

14 Williams, Game Trails in British Columbia, 8.
and educators desired to carefully control both private and public behaviour, and when manufacturers attempted to routinize and standardize industrial labour processes, sportsmen’s desire to increase the unpredictability of hunting indicates their ambivalent relationship to the processes of modernity. Seeking both to resist and to accommodate urban-industrial capitalist society, sportsmen defied the increasing rationalization of nature, yet they did so in fundamentally modern ways. The possibility of failure—the potential for the hunted to dismember or even kill the hunter and thus reverse the hierarchy of power between animal and human—enabled sport hunters to stake greater claims in the project of mastery. The greater the obstacles one faced, the higher the degree of danger one encountered, and the more admirable and powerful the hunter.

Amongst the various methods of hunting, most sportsmen agreed that stalking and still-hunting were the most sportsmanlike in that these particular techniques required the greatest skill from the hunter and allowed the animal the greatest chance of escape. Stalking, perceived as a “noble art,” as “the pinnacle of woodcraft” by most sportsmen, required the hunter to follow the path of his prey without being seen or heard by the animal, typically after detecting animal tracks in the ground or snow. This tactic demanded the sportsman have considerable knowledge of the habits of various animal species, as well as skill and experience navigating the wilderness more generally. As one hunter boasted, “one must be a consummate trailer, a good shot, have tireless limbs and wind and a complete knowledge of the animal’s habits and ways of moving and

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thinking.”¹⁸ Hunters thus believed that stalking was the ultimate test of one’s woodcraft and one’s prowess in a one-to-one contest with an animal, and took pride in successful efforts at stalking and killing in the animal’s natural habitat. After such a hunt, one author reflected, a hunter “feels proud, for he has sought a keen, wary animal in its natural home, and outwitted it.”¹⁹ Still-hunting also required considerable knowledge of woodcraft and animal behaviour, but was less physically taxing on the hunter. A still-hunter selected a location in the wilderness and remained there, frozen, until an animal appeared, at which point the hunter took aim and shot.

Two methods of hunting provoked considerable controversy amongst sportsmen: calling, the practice of imitating either the sounds uttered by cow moose while rutting or the noises made by bull moose when fighting other stags, and hounding, the use of dogs to identify, pursue, and attack game animals. Many hunters believed that these tactics provided unfair advantages to the human and thus violated the principles of fair chase. In their eyes, luring moose through mimicry or killing deer with the help of dogs introduced an element of artificiality into the hunt; one was not truly testing one’s ability to outwit and outmaneuver an animal when relying on such extraneous techniques. Hunter James Dickson wrote that “of all the unsportsman-like methods resorted to in order to secure a haunch of venison or set of antlers, I hold that the calling of the male moose during the rutting season takes the lowest place,” while Rev. Dr. Murdoch, hunter and conservationist, argued that hounding was responsible for the declining deer population in Ontario: “Why are the deer vanishing over these vast tracts of forest land? Not the

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¹⁸ Ibid., 116.
encroachments of civilization… The answer is DOG! D-O-G!”

T.R. Patillo, an avid hunter, argued that the use of hounding damaged one’s reputation as a true sportsman. “A moose held by dogs,” Patillo wrote, “so that he has no freedom, seems to me unjustified slaughter.” Another hunter agreed, writing that “there is always something lacking in sport where the game is helpless when caught.” Sportsmen thus saw these techniques as underhanded means of usurping what was supposed to be a primal conflict between animal instinct and human wit.

Other sport hunters, however, defended the use of calling and hounding as legitimate practices. These men argued that calling a bull moose in accurate mimicry of a cow moose required tremendous skill and was an art in itself. As one sportsman wrote, calling was “very fine sport, for it not only tests one’s skill in the perfect imitation of a weirdly unfamiliar sound, but also in the stealthy approach of a highly suspicious and shy beast.” Others suggested that the use of dogs was acceptable because animals naturally preyed upon each other in the wilderness and, therefore, hounding was not in fact an artificial technique of hunting but one that imitated natural processes. Arthur Bryan Williams suggested that hounding ensured wounded animals were not left to suffer in the wilderness: “[h]unting deer with hounds, when carried out in a sporting way, was not only good fun, but it had the advantage that you could be sure of finding a wounded

23 W.A. Baillie-Grohman, Fifteen Years’ Sport and Life in the Hunting Grounds of Western America and British Columbia (London: Horace Cox, 1900): 125.
“beast.” The elite sportsman continued, however, to caution that not everyone could be trusted to use dogs in a sportsmanlike manner. “Unfortunately,” Williams wrote, “it became a common practice for Indians, and some white men too, to hunt them unmercifully with dogs of all sorts, breeds, and descriptions, and then, when the unfortunate deer took to the sea or some lake, they were chased in canoes and hit on the head with a club.”

Canadian hunters thus used the sportsmen’s code in ways that reflected the influence of both British hunting culture and local, indigenous, and settler hunting culture. The specific techniques condoned and condemned are particularly illustrative of Canadian hunters’ desire to define their sport against the practices of First Nations hunters and rural market hunters. In addition to Williams’s derogatory commentary on indigenous methods, other sportsmen, too, lamented the techniques of First Nations and market hunters that allegedly enhanced the power of hunter over hunter and thus unfairly violated the principles of fair chase. These supposedly illegitimate methods included jacklighting, the use of bright lanterns to stun an animal and shoot the creature in its paralyzed state, crusting, the pursuit of game during times of the season when thick crusts formed atop snow banks, which made escape difficult for heavy animals and pursuit easier for hunters on snowshoe, and yarding, the coralling of wild animals within confined spaces to simplify tracking and shooting. One hunter described jacklighting as a cruel, evil tactic: “a strange light glides noiselessly towards animals and they stand transfixed and apparently fascinated by the glare, until its reflection in their glittering eyeballs discovers their position to the concealed marksman who, at close quarters, fires

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24 Williams, *Game Trails of British Columbia*, 211.
between the two with deadly effect.”25 Another author wrote in the pages of *Rod & Gun in Canada* that yarding was a wasteful and unsustainable technique in that it encouraged “the Indian, with his love of reckless waste of life, to kill off a band of moose in a moose yard…the Indians are rapidly killing out all the food by wantonly destroying, whenever they get the chance, far more game than they can use.”26 These sportsmen claimed that such techniques were not true reflections of one’s woodcraft but in fact rendered hunting a game of underhanded trickery that failed to respect the integrity of animal prey.

In their efforts to denigrate the hunting methods of First Nations, as well as those of rural market hunters and pot hunters, elite sportsmen drew upon the language and imagery of commercial meat production, constructing these supposedly unsportsmanlike men as ‘butchers’ and ‘slaughterers’. These authors argued that indigenous hunters in particular failed to understand the principles of sportsmanship and conservation and, rather than hunting to procure the minimum needed for survival, killed wild animals out of the sheer, bloodthirsty love of death. Such butchers of game ought not to be allowed to hunt; clearly, elite sportsmen argued, these slaughterers did not care for animals as did Anglo-Saxon hunters. As John Dean Caton and W.B. Leffingwell wrote in an article entitled “The Ethics of Field Sports,” indigenous hunters’ and pot hunters’ “love of slaughter” would be “better gratified in the abattoir than in the woods.”27 The disparaging allusions to butchery reflected sportsmen’s belief that hunting for subsistence was no longer necessary in a modern, technologically advanced nation and allowed these

hunters to position themselves as benevolent caretakers of nature, as opposed to cruel
market hunters who wreaked havoc upon the wilderness.\textsuperscript{28}

This butchery was all the more shameful, sport hunters argued, because there was
no way to stop the slaughterers of game who massacred animals in defiance of
conservation legislation. “Here is the rub,” one author wrote angrily in \textit{Rod & Gun in
Canada}, “Some idiot who gets a gun in his hand as a new sensation goes out on the first
open day, bangs at everything that shows feathers or fluff…then comes home and boasts
of the splendid day’s ‘sport’ (?) he has had, while the sportsman who goes out for real,
true, manly and honest sport stands by and is obliged to see the infinite and inestimable
damage being done and can say nothing.”\textsuperscript{29} Sportsmen felt threatened by market hunters
and feared that reporting poachers to government officials would cause these ‘criminals’
to seek revenge by destroying sport hunters’ favourite hunting grounds or by looting and
plundering hunters’ camps, all the while evading prosecution from conservation
authorities. “It is nice to frame laws to protect game,” one sportsman lamented, “but
where the shoe pinches, is to see that at the present time the Indians and others have
‘carte blanche’ to slaughter these animals. Why is this tolerated? We often hear the game
laws are a farce, and I am of the opinion that there are good reasons for this.”\textsuperscript{30}

Sportsmen’s code of ethics was thus concerned with the appropriate ends of
hunting, not simply the legitimate means of hunting. Elite hunters denounced rural
settlers’ and indigenous hunters’ habit of selling wild meat for profit, and argued that in a

\textsuperscript{28} See, for instance, arguments made in Commission of Conservation, \textit{National Conference on
Conservation of Game, Fur-Bearing Animals and Other Wild Life} (Ottawa: J. de LaBroquerie Tache,

\textsuperscript{29} Anonymous, “The Butcher ‘Sport,’” \textit{Rod & Gun in Canada} Volume VII no. 5 (October 1905): 519.

\textsuperscript{30} E.R. LaFleche, “Our Big Game and Their Enemies,” \textit{Rod & Gun in Canada} Volume VIII no. 11 (April
1907): 961.
modern, civilized country such as Canada, such practices ought to be outlawed. These commentators believed that Western civilization had evolved to the extent that one no longer had to rely on hunting for subsistence purposes; the sport should thus be an act of leisure only. Pointing to recent advances in the system of commercial meat production, sportsmen argued that the selling of wild animal flesh for profit was not just unnecessary, it was also an immoral and repugnant act that obstructed the development of urban-industrial society and interrupted proper capitalist growth. As one hunter wrote, “[w]hen a man allows the element of profit to enter into the day’s hunt, avarice, greed, and the desire for a big bag cloud the mind, dull the conscience and the beauties of Nature, and the proper love for field sports are for the time forgotten—the hunter is converted into a mercenary creature who deserves the contempt of honorable sportsmen.”

Alongside this disparagement of hunting for profit, sportsmen also chastised the killing of wild game out of a greedy lust for trophies or a sheer love of slaughter. “Sport is sport,” one author wrote, “it means recreation, exercise, pure air, health, and invigoration; but wanton, thoughtless, and reprehensible slaughter of game ought to find no record in the formula of action which guides true and legitimate sportsmen.” The author continued to argue that “no true sportsman” would ever kill an animal simply to boast of one’s skill and woodcraft or to out-hunt one’s colleagues. Respectable sportsmen would not kill without practical or utilitarian reason: “[n]o true sportsman will kill a Bison for his tongue, a Wapiti for his head, or a Moose for his skin.”

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32 William Pittman Lett, “The Wolf,” in The Big Game of North America: Its Habits, Haunts, and Characteristics; How, When, and Where to Hunt It, edited by O.G. Shields (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1890): 80. Or as another contemporary observer argued, “it is almost a truism that the very best way to terminate any species of wildlife is to put a price upon its head. As long as there are dealers in game you will find men who will kill it in spite of anything you may do to the contrary.” See Frederick K. Vreeland, “Prohibition of the Sale of Game,” in Commission of Conservation, ed.,
To be a true sportsman, then, one must use each part of the animal without waste, yet one must not sell any part for profit; one should appreciate the value of animals’ bodies, yet one should not kill in order to obtain any one part in particular. Hunters’ code of conduct thus consisted of a complex set of rules that dictated appropriate uses of dead animals. This code also reflected changing understandings of animals’ value during a time of broader economic transformation, in which the act of consumption rather than that of production increasingly came to define an individual’s status and identity in society.\footnote{Marks, \textit{Southern Hunting in Black and White}, 100; Loo, “Of Moose and Men,” 308.} Sportsmen denigrated those who practiced hunting as a mode of production, criticizing market hunters for remaining stuck in an archaic way of existence that was not appropriate in a modern, urban-industrial society. Moreover, market hunters’ commodification of wild animals eroded the boundary that sportsmen constructed between ‘wilderness’ and ‘civilization,’ collapsing the distinction between what sportsmen perceived as two incommensurable spheres and tainting the noble forests with the worst vices of industrial capitalist society.\footnote{Lynda Jessup has pointed out the ways in which Victorians’ views of nature as an uninhabited wilderness functioned to produce nature as an artifact of modern capitalism, while Greg Gillespie has discussed the historical transition in Victorians’ perception of nature from the significance of aesthetics to that of use value. See Lynda Jessup, “Landscapes of Sport,” and Greg Gillespie, \textit{Hunting for Empire: Narratives of Sport in Rupert’s Land, 1840-1870} (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007). For a discussion of conflicts between market hunters and sport hunters, see Jean L. Manore, “Contested Terrains of Space and Place: Hunting and the Territory Known as Algonquin Park, 1890-1950,” in \textit{The Culture of Hunting in Canada}, edited by Jean L. Manore and Dale G. Miner (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007): 121-147. For a discussion of links between tourism and nationalism see Marguerite Shaffer, \textit{See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940} (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001). Alan MacEachern has argued that the aesthetic consumption involved in nature tourism produces social differences; one might argue further that hunting tourism perpetuated species differences. See Alan MacEachern, \textit{Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935-1970} (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001): 6.}

While denigrating market hunters’ incursions into the wilderness as destructive and chastising the commodification of game animals’ dead bodies, sport hunters ignored...
the ways in which their own intrusions into the forest commodified wild animals and facilitated the capitalist colonization of nature. In particular, elite hunters encouraged the commercialization of their sport by promoting tourism; much of sportmen’s opposition to market hunting derived from their desire to ensure abundant game populations existed for their own enjoyment as well as for that of visiting hunters from the United States and Great Britain.35 Canadian sportsmen argued that wildlife tourism was immensely valuable to the economic development of the nation and that, consequently, wild animals ought to be saved from the cruel guns of market hunters and reserved for the genteel rifles of wealthy big game hunters. These tourists, sportsmen argued in the pages of hunting magazines, supported provincial governments by purchasing licenses, while also sustaining outfitting industries, hiring local guides and cooks, purchasing camping equipment from local merchants, traveling on new railroad lines, and frequenting Canadian hotels and restaurants. One author estimated the value of a wild animal to be vastly greater when reserved for a visiting tourist than when killed by a local market hunter for sale as meat.36 Similarly, in a discussion of the relationship between conservation legislation and the tourist industry, one sportsman wrote that wild animals were very valuable when reserved for visiting sportsman, “while the same animal killed in defiance of the law is hardly worth the snowshoes and toboggan needed to carry its

36 As noted by James White in a collection of articles on conservation, “‘[a]s you perhaps know, one moose killed by a non-resident will bring to the country where the moose is killed over $300, while, if killed by a resident, it will only bring the price of the antlers and skin.’” See Commission of Conservation, eds. National Conference on Conservation of Game, Fur-Bearing Animals and Other Wild Life (Ottawa: J. de LaBroquerie Tache, 1919): 70
meat to the clearing.”

Despite their protestations against the commodification of wild animals, then, sport hunters participated in networks of trade and consumption that functioned to imbue wild animals with great socioeconomic value; killing animals transformed wildlife into consumable and exploitable objects.

**Identification, Ambivalence, Dismemberment**

Sportsmen’s hunting narratives were also characterized by frequent moments of intense emotional identification with their nonhuman prey. Some hunters felt a deep sense of remorse over the thought of killing animals, while others contemplated the capacity of animals to think and feel like humans. These anthropomorphic moments of empathy and identification in some ways paralleled nature writers’ efforts to define themselves through notions of kinship with animals. Professing love for animals and sympathy for animal death, big game hunters constituted themselves as kindhearted protectors of wildlife. Similar to the ways in which the sportsmen’s code functioned as a behavioural and rhetorical way of reframing killing as an act of gentlemanly civility as opposed to the barbarous methods of First Nations and market hunters, so too did narrative moments of sympathetic identification between human hunter and animal prey represent textual means of legitimizing animal death amidst growing awareness of animal extinction.

Some hunters identified with wild animals by contemplating the possibility of animal thought and emotion. One sportsman, for instance, pondered the ability of bears to recognize the danger conveyed in human speech. “There is in it something deep, unknown, mysterious beyond all their powers of comprehension,” the author reflected, “and they go away from it quickly when they can.” This particular author continued to argue that animals were highly intelligent beings who “understand more of our mental attitude than we give them credit for,” who were “always interested in observing the curious ways of the human kind… There are more people who have been watched and studied by bears in Muskoka than are aware of it.”

These kinds of observations were anthropomorphic in their effort to understand the thoughts and emotions of animals in human terms, and hunters described animals’ reactions to their presence as expressions of surprise, bewilderment, anxiety, curiosity, and suspicion—that is, as human characteristics. One hunter, for instance, wondered what the companions of murdered animals must think and feel when witnessing sportsmen in their acts of violence, conceiving of animal behaviour in anthropomorphic terms: “[i]t seemed a shame as I watched these two cows hurrying away, and I wondered what they thought (if they think) of having to leave the idol of their race, who but a moment before had stood there in all his majesty, the King of the Wilds, and was now a withering mass as helpless as a kitten.”

Other hunters, too, believed that animals were capable of rational thought. In *Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies*, William Temple Hornaday, observing the behaviours and habits of mountain goats, argued that the hardships these animals faced

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made them think, plan, and strategize: “[h]e must look ahead, and plan out his line of retreat, or come to grief. A deer has the quick dash and élan of a cavalry-man; but the goat figures things out carefully, on scientific principles, like a general of artillery.” Hornaday’s anthropomorphic attribution of goats’ ability to plan and to strategize paralleled the sentiments of Major W. Ross King, who believed that animals such as beaver were rational, intelligent creatures. King praised the skills and intelligence of beavers in their ability to erect homes and in their seeming tendency to form stable family units and communities, concluding that “the ingenuity shown in the prosecution of their labours appears to be rather the result of thought and reflection than of mere instinct.”

In rare occasions, hunters were so deeply affected by thoughts of human-animal kinship that they were ultimately unable to shoot. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as ‘buck fever,’ was oftentimes attributed to inexperience and nerves. As one hunter wrote, “my nerves shook so that I could hardly hold my rifle. My heart seemed to beat my side with blows like a hammer, and as the wind and snow blew into my face, the tears gathered in my eyes.” Buck fever also affected more experienced hunters; as one author wrote of the syndrome, “many an old hand at the game loses his nerve when at length he is confronted by the noble stag in a pose of sturdy pride and confidence in his own vast powers. The fingers tremble, ever so slightly.” For some authors, contemplating the ability of animals to think and feel and the possibility of human-animal kinship was more than a fleeting moment of sentimentalism; hunters’ anthropomorphism occasionally interrupted the act of killing itself, rendering their guns impotent.

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41 Hornaday, *Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies*, 116.
44 Silver, *Farm-Cottage, Camp, and Canoe*, 119.
Another hunter, writing of his adventures in the pages of *Rod & Gun in Canada*, recalled an encounter with a moose in which he had deliberately misfired. Rather than admit to his companions that he simply did not want to kill the creature, the sportsman only pretended to desire the animal’s death. The author claimed to have had no desire to kill an animal spotted, but in response to feared judgment from his companions sighted his rifle far from the creature and missed, compensating for his apparently poor shooting skills by reminding his readers that, naturally, he “could have sent a bullet within three inches of any point on the animal” had he been so inclined. This particular sportsman was thus willing to endure ridicule for being a poor shot rather than face criticism for his sentimentalism; emotionality was a greater threat to his reputation than was bad marksmanship.

Some hunters’ sense of remorse over killing prompted them to characterize the sport anthropomorphically as an act of murder. One author, recalling moose hunting excursion in Nova Scotia with both human and canine companions, described his disgust and guilt over the use of dogs in stalking the moose, an act that contradicted the principles of the sportsmen’s code. After spotting the creature, the dogs pinned it down, and the moose was not provided a fair chance to escape. The hunter was overcome with emotion and was ultimately unable to shoot. The helpless nature of the pitiful creature provoked a sense of guilt within the hunter, whose inner consciousness reminded him that it would be cowardly to kill the animal “when he had no fair chance for his life.” One of the sportsman’s partners did, indeed, shoot and kill the moose, which caused the sentimental author further remorse at this needless slaughter. Moments like this, in which

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sportsmen felt shame over their acts of violence toward wild animals, were anthropomorphic, to be sure. These hunters’ sense of guilt stemmed from their effort to identify what they perceived to be human characteristics and abilities within their animal prey rather than from recognition of animal beings on their own terms.

Anthropomorphism was thus a means through which hunters identified with animals and contemplated possibilities of human-animal kinship. Animals’ formation of family units, for instance, was frequently cited as a way of rendering the habits of wild creatures familiar and comprehensible. “Cubs have to be brought up in a fit and proper manner,” Arthur Bryan Williams wrote of the habits of bears, “and so for the slightest breach of discipline are cuffed without mercy, though, when all is said and done, it is for their own good.” Because of bears’ essentially human capacity for feeling emotions, moreover, the hunter claimed that he would never shoot a mother bear with her cubs, since “there is nothing more distressing than to witness the grief of the cubs when they find their mother is dead; they moan and cry and often actually shed tears, just as a human being will.” Other hunters described the sight of animal suffering and death in similarly human terms, recalling the ways in which the animal seemed to gaze at them pleadingly from their pitiful eyes and remembering the agonized wails and screams that wounded or dying creatures emitted, sounds that reminded authors of human speech.

Similar to nature writers’ efforts to speak with and through animals, some sportsmen identified with wildlife by writing hunting stories from the animal’s perspective or by imagining animals’ inner lives more generally. Recall Philip Moore’s encounter with a Rocky Mountain grizzly bear in With Gun & Rod in Canada.

47 Williams, Game Trails of British Columbia, 87.
48 Hunter, Canadian Wilds, 159.
Complaining about the “annoying human beings” who were always intruding into grizzlies’ business, Moore, through the bear narrator, offered a critical, anthropological study of humans from the animal’s perspective and chastised unsportsmanlike methods of hunting.\(^{49}\) Sportsmen “do take unfair advantage of us poor bears,” the grizzly lamented. “Being afraid to come to close quarters, they stand off a long way and shoot at us. Sometimes they leave food around with poison…men should not be allowed to hunt us nor carry guns.”\(^{50}\) In his effort to convey a bear’s understanding of game hunting, then, Moore, himself a guide and an avid sportsman, expressed a considerable degree of sympathy for wild animals. John Fannin, hunter, taxidermist, and curator of the Royal British Columbia Museum, expressed a similar sense of guilt over killing animals and was tormented with remorse over his role in causing the deaths of nonhuman beings. Reflecting that “there is a good deal of murder in the shooting down of a wild animal,” Fannin tried to imagine his life as a bear, one moment enjoying the freedom of nature, the next moment facing cold death at the hands of cruel human hunters.\(^{51}\)

Two stories appeared in *Rod & Gun in Canada* that described a moose hunt from the animal’s perspective. “A Woodland King” and “A Tragedy of the Wilds” followed a nearly identical plotline. The tales begin with the birth of a young moose calf and the subsequent death of his mother at the hands of a rural pot hunter. The mother’s death is tragic, as the hunter has used the unsportsmanlike technique of jacklighting to kill the animal. The now motherless moose protagonist grows to become the largest and strongest creature in the forest, but he, too, dies by the gun of an illegitimate hunter. The villainous hunter in “A Woodland King” is a French Canadian trapper named François, who stalks

\(^{49}\) Moore, *With Gun and Rod in Canada*, 126.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., 127.
\(^{51}\) John Fannin, “The Rocky Mountain Goat,” 360-1.
and shoots the creature even though he had no need for meat. The wounded moose does not die instantly but flees the hunter’s gun, eventually attacked by a pack of vicious wolves. The animal’s death is rendered unnecessary and functions as a means through which the author condemned illegitimate hunters—jacklighters, unsportsmanlike backwoods settlers—who defied the sportsmen’s code, while suggesting that true sportsmen loved animals and valued animals’ rights to live and die according to a higher set of principles.52

But the intense emotionality hunters experienced preceding the death of animal prey quickly dissipated following the report of their rifles. At the moment of death, authors’ romantic appreciation of the animal’s nobility gave way to a rational, straightforward explanation of the particular way in which the animal died—what organs had been affected, where the bullet had entered—and how the creature was disassembled and butchered. One hunter, for instance, initially expressed delight at spotting what was, in his eyes, a majestic and noble caribou, perceiving the animal as a creature of awe and wonderment. The hunter’s narrative immediately changed tones after he shot and killed the caribou, and his sentimental praise for the animal’s magnificence became a mechanical description of the caribou’s dismemberment. At one moment so captivated by the creature’s “beautiful eyes” that he “felt like a murderer,” after killing the caribou the author quickly and efficiently “cut off his head, then skinned him partly so as to hack off some slices of meat from the flank for the morning meal, hung up the head on the branch of a tree and started back for the camp.”53 The narratives of other hunters, too, reflected


this sudden shift in tone, from an engaged, emotional admiration of the animal to a passive detachment of self from the creature’s death. “I shall never forget the noble picture that great caribou stag presented as he stood with raised head, and dark shapely form, clear cut against the snowy background,” one sportsman recalled. “When he saw me he turned towards me, and I at once fired…I now set to work, and after disemboweling both the dead animals skinned their necks and cut off their heads.”

Despite identifying emotionally and empathetically with the animal and feeling a sense of remorse over causing death, hunters’ decision to kill their prey transformed the animals from living, kindred, romanticized beings, to a collection of abstract parts and objects to be consumed by humans. The hunted animal was quickly objectified upon the moment of death. In sportsmen’s recollections of moments of animal death, sentimentalism gave way to scientific observation, killing was described in detached and mechanical terms, and the animal became an object rather than a living entity, a set of antlers rather than a sentient creature. The practical function of such objectification was to normalize violence; once the animal had become a thing rather than a being, dismemberment, disassembly, and butchery could proceed without regret.

Why did these sportsmen kill their prey after expressing such empathetic identification with the creature as a fellow thinking and feeling being? Harriet Ritvo has argued that such moments of sympathy between human and animal in English big game hunters’ narratives functioned as distinctive narrative strategies through which sportsmen positioned themselves as kindhearted and benevolent masters, appealing to the anthropomorphic tradition of animal loving characteristic of English society. “Descriptions of the animals’ death scenes provided a counterpoint to both the passionate

54 Selous, Recent Hunting Trips in British North America, 190-191.
aggression of the chase and the detached efficiency of the slaughter,” Ritvo observes. “In addition to admiration, they seemed to offer a measure of sympathy.”\(^5^5\) Expressions of empathy and kinship with animal allowed hunters to obscure the more violent aspects of their sport while simultaneously constituting themselves as lordly conquerors of nature.

Such observations are particularly evident in one North American hunter’s emotional reaction to killing. This author pointed out that, while killing the wild creatures oftentimes occasioned feelings of guilt, shame, and regret, one ought “to be manly about it” and take pride in one’s mastery of nature: “It was a difficult thing to do. It was intellect against instinct. It was reason against cunning. You have won your laurels; and as the eyes of the monarch gaze down upon you from the walls, you proudly tell your boys the story. As a skillful woodsman, an expert hunter, they will always have cause to revere you.”\(^5^6\) Acknowledging the ways in which the eyes of an animal, gazing up at its killer, were able to evoke sentimental feelings of shame and regret, the author of this article also sought to remind readers that, while understandable, such displays of emotionality were unbefitting a true sportsman; the ability to restrain one’s feelings was part of what it meant to be manly and civilized.

These narrative moments of sympathy and emotionality between human hunter and animal prey performed particularly important cultural and political work in the colonial context of turn-of-the-century Canada. Anglo-Canadian sportsmen’s contemplation of human-animal kinship, and their efforts to identify with animals, was a


\(^{56}\) W.A. Perry, “Elk-Hunting in the Olympic Mountains,” 60.
means of differentiating themselves from indigenous and market hunters. These hunters contrasted their allegedly benevolent, kindhearted culture of hunting with the supposedly cruel and wasteful methods of indigenous hunters. Those hunters who did acknowledge the ways in which First Nations hunters addressed their prey as kin and asked its forgiveness for killing did so in a manner that belittled and animalized the indigenous hunter. Sentimentalism and empathy, then, constituted a distinctive narrative trope through which hunters naturalized their appropriation of indigenous landscapes and traditions, indicating the ways in which killing animals was crucial to the expansion of the Canadian nation and empire in the years following Confederation.

**Big Game Hunting, Race, Empire, and Colonialism**

The rising popularity of sport hunting, then, was not just an antimodernist response to urban-industrial growth but was integral to the colonial consolidation of the Canadian nation and empire. Sport hunters’ perception of killing animals as a means toward individual and national rejuvenation doubled as a commentary on the need for racial regeneration more broadly; animal death, then, signified the progress of Western civilization in a newly colonized dominion. The evolution of society to a stage in which one hunted for leisure rather than for survival, according to sportsmen, comprised part of a broader imperialist rhetoric that fused the killing of wild animals with the spread of Anglo-Saxon civilization, and Canadians’ desire to promote northern vigour and racial fitness through hunting necessarily entailed the dispossession of First Nations men and women from their lands and their culture. The culture of big game hunting did not,

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57 Identification with animals, then, functioned in ways similar to the ways in which the sportsmen’s creed operated to differentiate sportsmen’s hunting from methods of indigenous and market hunters. See Loo, “Of Moose and Men,” 307.
therefore, simply reflect pre-existing hierarchical relations of power between colonizer and colonized, but was itself contributive to colonialism in turn-of-the-century Canada.\textsuperscript{58}

Elite big game hunters believed that the spread of European civilization across the Canadian wilderness was inevitable, and they saw themselves as the harbingers of empire in the dominion. Hunters’ narratives were filled with descriptions of Canada as a vast, uninhabited, rugged and northern landscape, one that was rife with possibilities for exploitation and development. Hunter-authors proclaimed that “[t]he hunter and frontiersman [was] always the advance guard of advancing civilization” and that the “restless white” was unceasing in his search of unexplored lands.\textsuperscript{59} In the poetic introduction to his early twentieth century hunting narrative entitled *Trails, Trappers, and Tender-feet in the New Empire of Western Canada*, sportsman Stanley Washburn similarly positioned Anglo-European hunters as imperial conquerors of uncharted lands. These “trappers of fur” and “hunters of game,” Washburn suggested, deserved credit for discovering the vast potential of the Canadian wilderness to produce imperial wealth: “[a]nd the trail they trod but yesterday is an empire’s path to-day.”\textsuperscript{60} Characterizing the rise of Canada’s empire as “the romance of the twentieth century,” Washburn celebrated hunters as agents of progress and civilization, as heroes who initiated the conquest and

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\textsuperscript{60} Washburn, *Trails, Trappers, and Tender-feet*, inset.
development of supposedly empty lands and untapped resources in the name of imperial greatness.⁶¹

Not just a nostalgic, antimodernist way of lamenting urban-industrial modernity, killing wild animals was also a very forward-looking means of asserting confidence in the future of Canada’s emerging empire. Game hunting provided a way for sportsmen to participate in the violent processes of colonial conquest; elite hunters saw their sport as one of exploration and discovery and drew explicit connections between the killing of wild animals and the expansion of empire. Gaining mastery over the landscape and subduing indigenous animals signaled one’s imperial power in supposedly virgin lands; sportsmen saw themselves as conquerors of sites “into which no hunting party has ever penetrated,” as masters of spaces “where moose, caribou, and antelope-goat are still unfamiliar with the sight of white-skinned human beings.”⁶² Prominent hunter and naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton, in thinking of his colleagues in an outdoors fraternity called the Camp-Fire Club, remarked “how they must envy me the chance of launching into the truly unknown wilderness, a land still marked on the maps as ‘unexplored’” upon embarking on a hunting trip into the Canadian north.⁶³ Finally, Washburn claimed to have realized the potential greatness of the Canadian empire only after he had shot and killed his first animal. Hunting, the sportsman reflected, had “awakened in my imagination the vision of a new and greater Canada, an Empire which still lay untrammeled and slumbering the sleep that centuries of progress and advancing civilization had not yet touched.”⁶⁴

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⁶¹ Ibid., 9.
⁶² Baillie-Grohman, Fifteen Years’ Sport, 7.
⁶³ Seton, The Arctic Prairies, 236.
⁶⁴ Washburn, Trails, Trappers, and Tender-feet, 54.
The brotherhood of sport hunters also drew parallels between killing wild animals in Canada’s wilderness and big game hunting in other colonized lands such as Africa and India. “As a rule sportsmen are the first to penetrate into unexplored regions, leading the way for miners and others engaged in occupations that bring them into contact with the wilderness,” one hunter declared. “In Africa, Australia, and Asia, the amateur or professional hunters were invariably the forerunners.”65 American hunter and taxidermist William Temple Hornaday similarly compared hunting in the Canadian Rocky Mountains to sport in other colonial sites: “[t]o kill, in such a setting, a mountain ram, a goat or a grizzly bear is Hunting, indeed. With all her bison and tigers, buffalo and bear, India has nothing like it south of the Himalayas, not even in the Nilgiris. Judging by a thousand photographs, I should say that with all her multitudes of big game, Africa has nothing like it, anywhere.”66 Sportsmen thus constituted a transnational, imperial community, which allowed hunters from all parts of the world to participate in global processes of conquest.

Sportsman and author Clive Phillips-Wolley made the links between killing animals and imperial conquest explicit in a 1902 article from Rod & Gun in Canada. In discussing British Columbia’s significance to Canada and to the British Empire more generally, Phillips-Wolley considered the parallels between big game hunting in Canada and sport in Africa and India. Suggesting that “Britain’s colonial empire owes a vast debt to her wild game and to the sporting instinct,” the sportsman made explicit reference to the ways in which killing wildlife did not simply reinforce imperialism but produced

65 Baillie-Grohman, Fifteen Years’ Sport, 120.
66 Hornaday, Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies, 236.
modern empires. The author continued to argue that the Canadian dominion was a superior sporting country because one did not have to worry about contracting tropical diseases and because wild animal populations were much larger in Canada than in Africa. Other sportsmen agreed that Canadian forests compared favourably to the hunting grounds of Africa and India because those colonial spaces had already been over-hunted. Moreover, British colonial ventures in Asia had demoralized the once great Empire, tainting the metropole with Eastern decadence. The exploitation of Canadian game promised new opportunities for imperial regeneration and racial regeneration. “To those of us who are weary and impatient of the chronicles of the old days, and are anxious to visit no more the decadent East,” one hunter observed, “to get closer to the primeval conditions of nature, Canada, the future country of the world, peopled with a vigorous northern race, offers herself.”

Hunters’ perception of themselves as agents of empire gave them a sense of imperial privilege and, similar to their denigration of First Nations’ hunting techniques, elite white sportsmen also chastised the skills and knowledge of indigenous guides. Despite their reliance on these guides for survival in the harsh Canadian wilderness, sportsmen derided indigenous customs and treated guides with a patronizing sense of contempt. Hunters’ periodicals were filled with articles that discussed how best to control indigenous guides, most often instructing prospective hunters to refuse their guides alcohol. As one author wrote disparagingly of First Nations men, “[m]ost of them have

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69 Egbert Owen, “The Coming North,” Rod & Gun in Canada Volume V no. 7 (December 1903): 379.
70 Ralph, On Canada’s Frontier, 84.
Sport hunters saw their guides as “wonderful beasts of burden,” as slavish servants whose knowledge of woodcraft was useful only insofar as it ensured success in securing a trophy. If the sportsman failed to kill an animal, he blamed the supposed ineptitude of his guide. One sportsman expressed outright rage toward his guide after failing to secure a trophy, remarking that “[i]f killing Indians had been fashionable at the time, I certainly would have slain one of those fellows.” Elite hunters believed that their guides took advantage of their wealth by deliberately preventing them from killing game and thus forcing the sportsman to pay for an extended trip. As one author complained, “my guide’s principal occupation was devising how to kill time and keep me in the woods as long as possible at four dollars a day.” Reliance on indigenous knowledge to survive, then, did not translate into respect for that wisdom.

Alongside their contempt for indigenous guides, many sportsmen saw First Nations peoples in general as childlike creatures in need of Anglo-Canadian guidance and protection. Ernest Thompson Seton, for instance, frequently commented on the allegedly childlike simplicity of indigenous men and women, writing that “[t]he Indians are simply large children, and further, no matter how reasonable your propositions, they take a long time to consider it and are subject to all kinds of mental revulsion” and that “[t]he Indians are like a lot of spoiled and petulant children, with the added weakness of adult criminals; they are inconsistent, shiftless, and tricky…the most worthless and contemptible of the

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71 Moore, *With Gun and Rod in Canada*, 52.
human race.”74 Hunters such as Seton believed that Aboriginal people, in their childlike state, were impulsive and undisciplined, unable to control their passions, and were irrational creatures incapable of taking care of themselves. “The Indian character is not well disciplined,” one hunter-author similarly claimed. “He is the victim of moods, one day bright and cheerful and obedient; the next, perhaps, sulky, churlish, and discourteous.”75

Anglo-Canadian sportsmen thus disparaged the supposed savagery and barbarism of indigenous peoples and touted the superiority of Western civilization, perceiving themselves as agents of both the British Empire and the Canadian colonial nation participating in the conquest and appropriation of new lands. But, as their antimodernist sentiments suggest, they were also critical of urban-industrial society and sought regeneration by reverting to a more primal state within the Canadian wilderness, a space constructed as the very antithesis of modernity. Sportsmen boasted of the “primitive spirit” rooted within their Anglo-Saxon heritage and saw big game hunting as a means through which this primordial self could emerge.76 These elite men pointed to First Nations peoples and argued that indigenous men and women had once maintained a noble existence in the wilderness, using the figure of the noble savage to critique Western culture.77

74 Seton, The Arctic Prairies, 116, 144.
75 Arthur P. Silver, Farm-Cottage, Camp, and Canoe in Maritime Canada: Or, The Call of Nov Scotia to the Emigrant and Sportsman (Toronto: The Musson Book Company Ltd., 1908): 111, quote 237; Ralph, On Canada’s Frontier, 15.
77 Philip Deloria, Playing Indian (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998). Such views contrasted with big game hunters’ views of indigenous peoples in other spaces such as Africa or India who were viewed much more negatively, with few redeeming qualities. In describing local Indian peoples, for instance, William Temple Hornaday positioned them, with their “heathen gods,” as lower than the animals he desired to kill: “The Hindoos are essentially beast-worshippers. They reverence the Brahmin bull, the monkey, the peacock,
Although Anglo-Canadian sportsmen criticized the supposed savagery of indigenous peoples, their own excursions into the wilderness often constituted an emulation of First Nations’ practices, a temporary regression to a state perceived to be more primitive. These authors believed that, since Anglo-European races had already evolved past the primeval hunter-gatherer stage, it was acceptable and indeed beneficial to reconnect with one’s ancestral roots without worry of remaining stuck in a permanent condition of barbarism. Sportsman Arthur Bryan Williams believed that the hunting instinct was inherent to those of Anglo-Saxon heritage, reflecting that “[t]here is in every man of British blood traces of primitive man, even if such traces are latent and not developed by opportunity. They create an overpowering desire to hunt and kill.”

Hunting was a sort of recapitulation of an earlier stage of European development, a stage from which First Nations had failed to evolve; as one hunter commented, “it is much easier for civilized man to become savage than for a savage to become civilized.” The mimicry of indigenous ways did not reflect sportsmen’s acceptance of Aboriginal customs but instead demonstrated hierarchical relations of power. Although elite hunters maintained the privilege to play Indian, indigenous peoples could not emulate the ways of modern, urban, Canadians.

While imperialist sportsmen admired particular elements of traditional First Nations culture, they did not believe it was possible for indigenous peoples to maintain such traditions amidst the relentless advance of Western civilization and perceived them

crocodile, cobra and other serpents—and these are the least objectionable of all their gods…their reverence of such degraded, filthy, naked, and unclean beasts as these fakirs, there is simply no excuse.” William Temple Hornaday, Two Years in the Jungle: The Experience of a Hunter and Naturalist (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910): 85-6.

78 Williams, Game Trails in British Columbia, viii.
79 Whitney, On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds, 153.
as relics of an ancient, primeval past. After characterizing Nova Scotia moose as belonging to a “remote and antediluvian period of time,” for instance, one author suggested that First Nations peoples shared this kind of primitiveness with wild animals: “[t]he Micmac Indian… strikes one as the ideal savage in his primitive state, and as an equally puzzling anachronism… time seems to have run backwards… the red man with his birch-bark canoe is as much an integral part of this northern wilderness as the black bear itself. After he has succumbed to that strange sickness which civilization has brought on his race, the rivers and forests will scarcely seem the same.”

Hunters’ perception of First Nations as belonging to an ancient past contradicted the contamination trope’s denigration of indigenous peoples’ supposed degeneration in their encounter with Western civilization; unable to become modern yet unalterably tainted by modernity, then, First Nations men and women were denied a place in the new Canadian empire.

As such, sportmen were confident that Western civilization would inevitably colonize the minds and bodies of all it encountered. Sport hunter Caspar Whitney, for instance, criticized imperialists’ methods of imposing Anglo-Canadian ways upon Aboriginal nations, yet did not think indigenous peoples were capable of retaining their own culture; as he wrote disparagingly, “[e]very one knows that the savage must disappear before the civilized man.” First Nations men and women were thus not simply denied the capacity to become modern, they were also denied the ability to retain their historical modes of existence. Unable to be either modern or traditional, sportmen argued, indigenous peoples were doomed to extinction altogether. Contemporary observers’ belief that First Nations men and women would inevitably vanish in the face

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80 Silver, *Farm-Cottage, Camp, and Canoe*, 120, 173.
of Euro-Canadian settlement echoed a more global discourse of extinction. In *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930*, Patrick Brantlinger argues that narratives of racial decimation characterized Euro-American perceptions of indigenous peoples from Africa to North America to Australia, and endured from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{82}

Reiterating this global discourse of extinction, Anglo-Canadians believed that First Nations peoples were members of a vanishing race, one that had been contaminated in its exposure to Western civilization. Indigenous women and men were “fast passing into the limbo of forgotten things” amidst the relentless advance of European culture and had no hope to survive in the modern world.\textsuperscript{83} In the face of “the great civilizer,” that is, Western society, one could see “the remnants of a race dying or losing its identity by absorption into the mass of society,” “the debased remnants of once powerful tribes” which had “passed from their primitive condition to one of poverty and debauched depravity.”\textsuperscript{84} Proponents of the contamination trope praised indigenous peoples’ non-materialistic ties to nature but argued that these noble aspects of First Nations culture had been corrupted with the advent of modern, urban-industrial society. The ‘noble savage’ was noble only if he or she remained utterly separate from Western civilization and rejected modernity.\textsuperscript{85} One sportsman argued that indigenous peoples recognized the


\textsuperscript{83} Philip H. Godsell, *Red Hunters of the Snows: An Account of Thirty Years' Experience with the Primitive Indian and Eskimo Tribes of the Canadian North-West and Arctic Coast* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1939): 16.

\textsuperscript{84} H. Barnard, “Northern Ontario,” *Rod & Gun in Canada* Volume IV no. 11 (April 1903): 387; Baillie-Grohman, *Fifteen Years' Sport*, 305.

\textsuperscript{85} Paige Raibmon has similarly discussed the ways in which First Nations have been denied the capacity to either become modern or retain traditional ways. See Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). See also Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal &
danger white civilization posed to the survival of their cultures but that they had no choice but vanish into the shadows of Anglo-European superiority, that “the white man and the redskin people cannot amalgamate.”  

Another hunter similarly argued that “[i]t is the verdict of all who have had to do with the red man, that he copies all of the white man’s vices and very few, if any, of his virtues;” consequently, “the end of the Indian is inevitable, and, like the buffalo, they will in a very few years be of the past… This is one of the results of railways and civilization. I can say with the late lamented Custer, ‘The good Indians are dead.’”

Although the rhetoric of contamination and degeneration was a critique of Western culture, big game hunters did not doubt the ultimate superiority of European civilization over the customs and beliefs of First Nations peoples. Nineteenth century Canadians admitted the existence of flaws in their society, particularly regarding the greed and opulence that accompanied the growth of modern capitalism. But they also believed that people of Anglo-Saxon heritage were better able to refrain from indulging in materialistic excess than were indigenous men and women, who were allegedly unable to resist the luring temptation of wasteful consumption, to the detriment of their morals and their once noble culture. Julian Ralph, an American game hunter who wrote of his experiences killing wild animals in Western Canada in the 1890s, suggested that the “best kind of Indian” was the one who remained closest to nature and resisted contamination from European civilization: “the Canadian Blackfeet are among the best. They are almost

Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990) for a fascinating discussion of the ways in which Canadian government policy legally entrenched such cultural notions of indigenous peoples’ incapacity to adjust to modernity.


as primitive and natural as any, nearly the most prosperous, physically very fine, the most free from white men’s vices. They are the most reasonable in their attitudes towards the whites of any who hold to the true Indian philosophy.”

In reproducing discourses of contamination and extinction, sport hunters sanctioned the expansion of Canadian colonialism.

Sportsmen also appealed to contemporary evolutionary theories to argue that First Nations peoples had not evolved past an animalistic state, perceiving indigenous men and women as wild, primitive, instinctive, and irrational, conflating indigeneity and animality. Hunters’ narratives lamented the status of Aboriginal men and women in Canada by describing how these indigenous peoples “live unnaturally and die unnaturally, precisely like other wild animals shut up in our parks,” how they had become “waxworks,” immobile, fascinated with white intruders “as eagles look at you from their cages,” thus reducing these Blackfeet peoples to the status of decorative object, freakish curiosity, caged animal. Ernest Thompson Seton similarly characterized indigenous peoples as akin to animals. The naturalist described witnessing his guide, Sousi, shooting a mother bear and her cubs during one of his hunting excursions in Canada. The bear allegedly “fell, sobbing like a human being, ‘Oh! Oh! Oh-h-h-h!’” and Sousi, later that night, “roasted one of the cubs,” an act that disgusted the elite author: “as I watched the old cannibal chewing the hands off that little baby Bear it gave me a feeling of disgust for all flesh-eating that lasted for days.” In his recollection of this event, Seton both humanized the animal and animalized the human, constructing the bear as a being more

89 Ibid., 16.
90 Seton, The Arctic Prairies, 49.
noble than the vicious guide, who the author characterized as cannibalistic for consuming the flesh of one of his own kind—a fellow animal. This type of thinking eroded the boundary between indigenous peoples and animals while strengthening boundaries between the very human Anglo-Canadian and the animalistic First Nations.

But alongside this rhetorical amalgamation of First Nations peoples and animals, sportsmen sought to physically separate indigenous men and women from the wild creatures that had historically sustained them. Elite hunters’ perception of Aboriginal hunters as slaughterers and butchers led them to propose conservation legislation that would restrict the ability of indigenous peoples to hunt wild game. One Canadian author argued that parliamentary measures were needed to limit the “barbarous extermination of large game” that resulted from indigenous methods of hunting, that First Nations peoples needed protection from their own destructive tendencies: “the law, with a wise, strong, and relentless hand, should protect the Indian against himself.”91 Another Anglo-Canadian guide agreed, arguing that although Aboriginal hunters were responsible for the wanton destruction of game in Western Canada, “the game laws seem to be all directed against the tourist as the chief destroying agent,” and, therefore, conservation laws ought to be altered to target First Nations rather than Americans or Europeans.92 Animal

92 “The Indians and Big Game in the West” Rod & Gun in Canada Volume VIII no. 4 (September 1906): 227. Despite sportsmen’s wishes, conservation legislation did not regulate indigenous hunters. See David Calverley, “‘When the Need for It No Longer Existed,’” 105-120. For an analysis of conservation in twentieth century Canada, including the participation of non-government interests see Tina Loo, States of Nature: Conserving Canada’s Wildlife in the Twentieth Century (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006). For regional studies of conservation, particularly Western Canada and the Northwest Territories, respectively, see George Colpitts, Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002) and John Sandlos, Hunters at the Margins: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007). For an analysis of the links between imperialism and conservation in other colonial spaces see John M. MacKenzie, The Empire of Nature: Hunting
conservation was designed to divide and separate particular groups of beings, both human and animal; Aboriginal reserves and animal preserves were designated spaces in which human and animal were to be utterly separate. Sportsmen argued that First Nations men and women must be removed from their animal ‘kin’ in order to ensure that wildlife existed for sport hunters to shoot, as well as to save indigenous peoples from their own destruction. Within the complex and often contradictory logic of empire in Canada, then, indigenous peoples were rendered animalistic in nature, akin to the brute, instinctive, passionate beasts of the forest, yet were also deemed incapable of existing alongside animals and thus in need of physical and geographical separation. In their denigration of First Nations’ hunting, then, Canadian sportsmen claimed membership within a global, imperial, ruling elite, using the privilege to kill animals as a means of participating in the colonial project unfolding in Canada at the turn of the century.

**Hunting, Masculinity, and Gender**

Killing animals in the name of individual, national, and imperial invigoration was also a deeply gendered act; big game hunting was also a response to perceived threats to masculinity in the late nineteenth century. As Gail Bederman has discussed in *Manliness and Civilization*, Victorians’ understanding of manliness was structured by class and race as well as by gender. Manliness was associated with both racial evolution and gender separation; Anglo-Saxon men and women occupied distinctive spheres in civilized societies, whereas the line dividing genders was uncertain within more primitive

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cultures. Civilization was thus the result of both white racial evolution and gender differentiation. But the meaning of manliness within a rapidly modernizing urban-industrial society was becoming unstable. The increasing presence of women in public life posed a threat to elite patriarchal hegemony, as did the growing strength of the working class. Sportsmen saw hunting as an activity that enabled them to avoid the feminizing influences of modernity by proving one’s masculine strength and prowess in mastering a fierce animal foe.

Hunters thus constructed the killing of a wild animal as a primeval battle between two manly foes. Sportsman Arthur P. Silver, for instance, was particularly careful to depict his animal prey as fierce and formidable enemies, thus positioning success in the hunt as an act that vindicated one’s virility and masculine might. “The frenzied stag was once more lowering his head and blustering about, confronting me in a menacing posture,” Silver recalled of one encounter with a stag moose. “Pawing up the soil with his great splayed hoofs, his sides heaving, jets of steam rising from his nostrils through the frosty morning air as he snorted defiance, mane bristling, and green eyes snapping with rage, he presented a fine picture of the very incarnation of evil fury.” In this showdown, whereby the author had “to wage a duel to the death with the fierce animal,” Silver dramatized his exploits killing wild animals as a militaristic battle against an animal that

94 Bederman, Manliness and Civilization; Loo, “Of Moose and Men,” 298; Jessup, “Landscapes of Sport,” 83-85; Marks, Southern Hunting in Black and White, 6. Discussing an earlier period of time and a different cultural characterization of manliness defined through hunting, Elizabeth Vibert has pointed to the ways in which mid-nineteenth century British fur traders praised the manliness of indigenous buffalo hunters, perceiving these First Nations men as brave, diligent, and warlike at a time when British constructions of manliness were changing in response to the rise of urban capitalism and Evangelicalism. Contemporary British observers valued manhood defined in terms of sobriety, hard work, and independence, which is how these traders perceived indigenous buffalo hunters. See Elizabeth Vibert, “Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race, and Class in British Fur Traders’ Narratives,” Gender & History 8 no. 1 (April 1996): 10.
was the epitome of brute strength.\textsuperscript{95} Sportsmen were careful to emphasize that they did not kill female animals, cherishing the antlered parts of bucks’ and stags’ bodies as evidence of their ability to subdue powerful male beasts. They phrased their narratives as militaristic endeavours, describing, for instance, the “councils of war” held prior to the chase, the tactical strategies devised, and the final battles that occurred between human and animal as a way of further gendering the animal as a distinctively masculine foe.\textsuperscript{96}

Sportsmen like Silver defined hunting as an activity that had defined the meaning of manhood for all of history, as an undertaking that separated true men from women and from lesser males such as menial labourers or members of racially inferior groups. After lamenting that “women have invaded many spheres of life which in days not far gone by were considered sacred to man,” one anonymous hunter writing in \textit{Rod & Gun in Canada} argued that the killing of wild animals remained one of men’s last refuges from the relentless force of feminization.\textsuperscript{97} One hunter suggested that the impulse to stalk and kill game was innate in true men, that “man is by natural instinct a sportsman,” while another author argued that “our Neolithic ancestors were all hunters. In the days of old a man either hunted or starved.”\textsuperscript{98} Hunters were thus members of a manly fraternity “in whom the primitive instinct is well developed,” who comprised a “band of brothers.”\textsuperscript{99} Such sentiments linked notions of racial evolution, imperialism, and civilization with

\textsuperscript{95} Silver, \textit{Farm-Cottage, Camp, and Canoe}, 146, 165.
\textsuperscript{96} See, for instance, Moore, \textit{With Gun and Rod in Canada}, 40; Fannin, “The Rocky Mountain Goat,” 349. This emphasis on killing males and not females was also a response to growing conservationist sentiment; to position themselves as benevolent masters of nature, sportsmen could not be seen as cruel killers of mothers and children.
\textsuperscript{97} Anonymous, untitled article, \textit{Rod & Gun in Canada} Volume VI no. 12 (May 1905): 703.
\textsuperscript{99} David Moore Lindsay, \textit{The Sportsman and Naturalist in Canada} (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1866): 11-12; Hedley, \textit{Notes of a Hunting Trip}, 61.
constructs of manliness; the killing of wild animals enabled sportsmen to prove their masculine status as civilized beings of high racial development.

Bederman and others have also argued that the late nineteenth century was a time when the very meaning of manhood was undergoing significant change, evolving from a concept of genteel manliness that was based on the values of respectability, refinement, and restraint, toward a notion of raw masculinity that was grounded upon a more plebian celebration of brute strength and rugged power. Middle and upper class men feared the loss of bodily strength in a society of increasing technological convenience and thus sought to embrace a more corporeal sort of manhood.\footnote{Bederman, \textit{Manliness and Civilization}; See also John Kasson, \textit{Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in Modern America} (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001) and Kevin Murphy, \textit{Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, and the Politics of Progressive Era Reform} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).} Arthur Bryan Williams, avid hunter and game warden of British Columbia, complained that even big game hunters, once symbols of virile manhood, had become weak in mind and body because of their increasing reliance on modern luxuries, thus drawing parallels between consumer capitalism and the loss of masculine vigour and indicating the ways in which antimodernist rhetoric was oftentimes deeply gendered. As Williams lamented, modern hunters were no longer satisfied with beans and bannock or with “simple, primitive camp life,” a growing reliance on modern consumer goods that threatened to erode conventional masculinity altogether.\footnote{Williams, \textit{Game Trails in British Columbia}, 318.} Sportsmen’s antimodernism thus stemmed in part from their belief that manly values such as independence and self-sufficiency were vanishing amidst urban-industrial modernity.

Canadian sport hunters, then, believed that killing wild animals in the Canadian forest was a manly activity that combatted the feminizing forces of modern society and
that allowed one to cultivate bodily strength by quite literally mastering the bodies of powerful beasts. Yet these men also argued that hunting should not promote a form of masculinity that encouraged the release of unbridled, primitive passion. Elite sportsmen’s efforts to regulate the techniques of indigenous and rural white market hunters who seemed unable to control their impulses and who slaughtered animals with reckless abandon indicate the ways in which notions of refinement and restraint remained key to these hunters’ sense of manhood. As one sportsman-author commented, experience in the wilderness taught a young hunter more than the techniques of killing animals: “[h]e will learn how largely acts of kindness and courtesy toward his companions contribute to the happiness of all; to commend the skill of others rather than to boast of his own…that a sportsman may be a gentleman.”102 Another hunter, writing of his companion named Port, believed genteel manliness could be cultivated through stalking and shooting wild animals: “[t]he manliness about Port and other men of his calling is not that of bravado, or that of the ‘bad man’ of literature; it is the quiet unobtrusive manliness of a character that, while it knows not what pusillanimous fear is, yet knows what death is.”103 The sportsman’s code was thus a combination of seemingly contradictory characterizations of manhood that both encouraged hunters to embrace a primitive sense of manly passion while continuing to act as self-restrained gentlemen.

While some scholars have interpreted hunting as a patriarchal act analogous to the raping of women whereby male predator inflicts violence upon female victim, others have suggested that the sport certainly encouraged the reproduction of patriarchy, but that it did so by positioning hunting as a ritual combat between two powerful and manly foes,

103 Baillie-Grohman, Fifteen Years’ Sport, 14.
the victorious hunter entitled to patriarchal privilege in his assertion of mastery. Econfeminist critic Marti Kheel, for example, has argued that turn-of-the-century hunters’ ethic of self-restraint did not include sexual restraint. The gentlemanly code of sportsmanship concealed the ways in which hunting narratives were structured as stories of rape and conquest wherein male hunter preys upon female hunted by sanctioning the release of aggressive sexual energy in the guise of genteel, civilized refinement. Simon Bronner, however, points out that sportsmen in the late nineteenth century did not enjoy killing female animals and preferred to stalk the largest, strongest, and most powerful stags. Bronner argues that hunting was a battle between opposing masculine forces within a feminized environment, contending that “the result of the combat in this fictive plane is the joining of the animal to the feminine environment and the fantasy that the man represented by the phallic extension of the gun is the only male left standing.”

Canadian sportsmen’s narratives support the arguments of both Kheel and Bronner. These elite hunters did seek to position their sport as an act that facilitated the maintenance of patriarchal hegemony, one in which virile sportsmen conquered feminized spaces and thus perpetuated masculine dominance. The rhetoric of gentlemanly restraint and refinement that these sportsmen promoted threatened to obscure the links between big game hunting and patriarchal power by reframing violent processes of conquest as innocuous acts of leisure and recreation. But most sportsmen also disparaged the killing of female animals and preferred to seek the finest specimen of stag or bull they could, characterizing hunting as a battle between two manly foes in

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which victory was a tangible demonstration of one’s brute strength. Although hunters chastised the unrestrained release of virile passion, they still celebrated the sport’s function as an activity that bolstered masculine dominance.

Very few women were allowed access into the masculine world of big game hunting. Some advertisements in *Rod & Gun in Canada* depicted images of women with gun in hand. In a 1902 promotion for Stevens rifles, a genteel woman in Victorian dress is shown seated, delicately holding a rifle, with a dog beside her. The woman is looking down at her canine companion, while the dog gazes off into the distance. The woman’s pinky is lifted into the air in a suggestion of elegance and refinement, as if sipping a cup of tea, though she is, in fact, holding a gun. In another ad for Stevens rifles, a woman is depicted taking aim with a rifle at no particular object. The sportswoman is young and attractive, clad in refined, feminine garments. A small child sits at her feet, holding two targets, while a bulldog lounges on her other side. Accompanying this visual combination of motherhood and femininity with the masculine act of shooting, the caption reads, “[t]here are no restrictions to this popular and fascinating sport, as old and young of both sexes can equally enjoy it.” But these advertisements did not position women as hunters. Women were allowed to participate in the sport of target shooting; the actual killing of wild animals remained a masculine prerogative. Advertisements for Savage Rifles, in comparison to those for Stevens, reiterated the construction of hunting as a manly act. In one ad, an indigenous man, clad in buckskin and feathers, is perched atop a dead, bloody bear, positioning hunting as an act of primitive manhood.

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106 Advertisement in *Rod & Gun in Canada* Volume IV no. 3 (August 1902).
107 Advertisement in *Rod & Gun in Canada* Volume V no. 6 (Nov 1903).
108 Advertisement in *Rod & Gun in Canada* Volume V no. 3 (August 1903).
Women did author the occasional article in hunters’ periodicals and sought to provide a female perspective on the great outdoors. In an article entitled “A Woman’s Views on Camping Out,” author Ella Walton argued that camping was an activity perfectly suited for women, since “primitive instincts are the same in a woman as in a man.” Still, Walton continued, women fared best in the woods when accompanied by men experienced in wilderness survival and when following the dictates of male companions: “the woman who will best enjoy life is she who follows most closely in the footsteps of her gentlemen friends and relatives. The woman who does this will forget to be nervous and hysterical, and gain a self-reliance and courage that years of traveling and mixing with the world cannot give.” An author using the pseudonym ‘Wahnapitae’ authored an article in a 1904 edition of *Rod & Gun in Canada* that echoed the antimodernist sentiments of male sportsmen that depicted camping as a rejuvenating remedy for overcivilization: “[w]hat a delightful feeling it is to sit out in the open around the big camp fire, and feel that we cannot be disturbed by any trolley cars, trains, or other signs of civilization…Surely some of us are inoculated with the ‘call of the wild’ and are happy in getting back to our original way of living!” Despite women’s effort to embrace this more primitive way of life, however, their narratives trivialized many aspects of their experiences in the wilderness. ‘Wahnapitae’ spent the bulk of her narrative describing appropriate apparel for women camping in the forest and pointing out the necessity for women to maintain proper decorum and etiquette at all times.

Moreover, women were not to participate in the actual killing of animals; that remained a male activity.

The rare articles that did tell women hunters’ stories did so in stereotypical ways, emphasizing women’s emotionality and irrationality. In an article called “The First White Woman Hunter of the Plains,” *Rod & Gun in Canada* told the story of an Irish immigrant woman named Margaret Ligget, who found herself confronted with a vicious wolverine soon after settling on the prairies in the late nineteenth century. The anonymous author recounted how Ligget’s “Irish blue eyes” met the “hungry eyes” of the animal, eyes that were “eager-for-blood,” and how the dainty woman overcame her fright and killed the animal. Immediately overcome by guilt at “the terrible thought of a life taken,” Ligget did not bask in her accomplishment or examine the animal carcass but fled the scene.\(^\text{111}\) While acknowledging Ligget’s capacity to shoot and kill a ferocious animal, then, the article is also careful to point out that this unladylike act of violence did not disrupt the immigrant’s essentially feminine nature, highlighting the woman’s sentimental reaction to the death of the animal.

Only one woman who hunted for sport appeared in the early pages of *Rod & Gun in Canada*. Mrs. Avery Morehouse of New Brunswick often joined her husband, a taxidermist and avid hunter, in his excursions. Mr. Morehouse, “evidently a believer in the equality of the sexes—in sport at least,” did his duty in indulging his wife’s desire to hunt: “[w]hen he goes on a hunting trip he doesn’t leave his wife at home moping, but like a good husband he takes her along with him.” In an article describing Mrs. Morehouse’s first successful caribou hunt, the magazine was careful to emphasize the

sportswoman’s domestic inclinations. Morehouse was “pleasantly elated” after bagging the animal with one bullet, but she “did not forget her domestic cares, and prepared a good supper in which caribou steak took a prominent place. When Mr. Morehouse returned, tired and hungry, he experienced a pleasant surprise.” The taxidermist’s wife told him the story of her caribou hunt, but like a respectable woman she did not “crow over him too much” or boast of her accomplishments, so as not to offend her husband’s masculine pride. “Our readers will agree with us that both husband and wife are to be congratulated on this success,” the article concluded, “[w]e trust it may prove a source of joy to them for many years to come and that it may not be left long without companion trophies to testify further to Mrs. Morehouse’s abilities and skill as a sportswoman.”

The article depicted Morehouse as a useful companion in the wilderness not for her marksmanship but for the ways in which her culinary skills and domestic tendencies eased the discomforts of camp life.

Grace Gallatin Thompson Seton, wife of prominent sportsman and naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton, wrote an extended narrative of her experiences camping and hunting in the Canadian wilderness, one of very few women to do so. Woman Tenderfoot describes Seton Thompson’s adventures in the forest with her husband, to whom she refers only as ‘Nimrod.’ The author devotes considerable space addressing the specific concerns of sportswomen: the types of garments she ought to have in the wilderness, the techniques of horse-riding that allow her to remain ladylike in comportment, and the necessary utensils and linens she needs to ensure a comfortable camp life. Seton Thompson also recalls her first hunting experiences and the ambivalence she had felt

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when faced with animal death. When the author encountered an elk with her husband, she urged Nimrod to shoot, yet quickly regretted this impulsive sentiment. “The stag tried also to get to shore,” Thompson Seton recalled. “But the ball had inflicted a wound which partially paralyzed his hindquarters. At the sight of blood and the big fellow’s struggles to get away, the horror of the thing swept over me. ‘Oh, kill him, kill him,’ I wailed ‘Don’t let him suffer!’”¹¹³ In response to this emotional outburst, Nimrod asked his wife whether she would kill an animal, to which she replied positively, provided she could be sure of instantaneous death. Purportedly aware of the clash between her womanly sensibilities and her desire to experience the thrill of game hunting, Seton justified the act of violence by pointing out her intention to minimize animal suffering.

Seton did in fact kill an animal and again expressed deep ambivalence about the meaning of this feat. “I took the gun without a word and crept down the mountain side, keeping under cover as much as possible,” the sportswoman recalled. “The sunset quiet surrounded me; the dead quiet of but one idea—to creep upon that elk and kill him—possessed me.” The author described the way in which the elk had raised its head and looked at her as she fired and had instantly dropped dead. The sportswoman felt neither guilt nor glory in her achievement: “I sat on the ground where I was and made no attempt to go near him. So that was all. One instant a magnificent breathing thing, the next—nothing. Death had been so sudden. I had no regret, I had no triumph—just a sort of wonder at what I had done—a surprise that the breath of life could be taken away so

easily.”\textsuperscript{114} Despite this ambivalent reaction, Seton killed an antelope a few days later, an act she described as one of murder. This time, the author was not disturbed by the death of the stag, who died instantly, but by “the twenty beating hearts of his harem! There they were, not one hundred yards away, huddled together with ears erect, tiny feet alert for the next sound—yet waiting for their lord and master, the proud tyrant, so strangely still on the ground…they took a few steps nearer and again waited, eyes and ears and uplifted hoofs asking the question, ‘Why doesn’t he come?’”\textsuperscript{115}

Although framing this sense of regret in familial terms, lamenting her role in the disruption of the antelopes’ domestic relations, the hunter did not see the killing of animals as an expression of crude blood lust. As she concluded, “hunting does not make one wholly a brute, crying ‘Kill! Kill!’ at every chance…the real fascination of hunting is not in the killing but in seeing the creature at home amid his glorious surroundings, and feeling the freely rushing blood, the health-giving air, the gleeful sense of joy and life in nature, both within and without.”\textsuperscript{116} Women’s hunting narratives thus echoed sportsmen’s antimodernist glorification of nature; though more ambivalent about the meanings of animal death, and though sportsmen took great care to construct hunting as an act demonstrative of patriarchal might, some women, too, inserted themselves into the patriarchal narrative of colonial violence.

**Conclusion**

Animal death reflected turn-of-the-century Canadians’ responses to broader cultural and political change; Canadian sportsmen killed wild animals as a way of negotiating shifting constructions of race, class, and gender within a rapidly modernizing

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 92, 94.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 173-4.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 177, 181.
society. Victorian hunters’ desire to stalk and kill animals embodied an antimodernist conviction that the condition of overcivilization weakened mind and body. Escaping the mechanized city, with its congestion and its opulence, and seeking solace in the wilderness, hunters believed, was a means of rejuvenating one’s spirit and reclaiming an authentic connection to nature. Yet these men did not reject the fundamental tenets of industrial capitalism and saw their sport as one that fostered increased productivity and efficiency upon their return to modern, urban life. Moreover, while hunters’ rhetoric constituted wilderness as a refuge from modern human civilization, its promotion of tourism and its commodification of dead animal bodies contributed to the capitalist colonization of those very same spaces.

Killing animals was also fused to nationalism and colonialism, and helped shape processes of gender formation in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada. Sportsmen saw themselves as mighty explorers conquering uninhabited lands in the name of empire. They disparaged indigenous men and women as members of a dying race who were unable to adapt to modernity yet were also unable to retain traditional cultures, using the animalistic trope of extinction to condemn First Nations to destruction. Sportsmen perceived Aboriginal peoples in metaphorical terms as akin to animals in their lack of rationality and restraint, yet sought to spatially separate them from their animal ‘kin.’ Finally, the killing of wild animals signified one’s virility and masculine prowess at a time when social commentators worried about the seeming erosion of gender distinctiveness. Hunting allowed men to prove their imperial and masculine might against a worthy foe. The deaths of wild animals, then, were used to signify mastery over marginalized groups, particularly women and First Nations, as well as domination over
animals. Yet hunters were careful to ensure their acts of killing were perceived as legitimate amidst rising awareness of conservation and animal extinction, appealing to the sportsmen’s code of gentlemanly conduct and espousing a sentimental and empathetic love for animals as a means of positioning themselves as kindhearted and benevolent masters of nature.

This chapter has examined the ways in which animal death mediated Canadians’ self-definitions and contributed to processes of nation building and empire building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The following two chapters examine how the meanings of wild animal death were authenticated in visual and material form. Through photography and taxidermy, contemporary Canadians desired to preserve traces of vanishing animals, mourning the disappearance of wildlife from the dominion’s forests while continuing to kill and consume such creatures. The preserved bodies of animals continued to have profound constitutive power over Canadians long after their deaths.
3: Picturing Animal Death: Photographic Representations of Mastery and Mourning

The objectification of hunted animals’ dead bodies did not end in the forest. Sportsmen in turn-of-the-century Canada also desired to authenticate their exploits visually and materially, snapping photographs of their dead quarry as visible proof of their virility and mastery and as tokens of memory that preserved experiences of killing over time. Practices of photographing dead animals were also responses to the perceived disappearance of wildlife from the dominion’s forests. As Canadians killed wild animals, they drew upon representational technologies in order to freeze the ephemeral moment of death, expressing a sense of guilt over the effects of human civilization upon animal populations and positioning photographs as a means of rendering disappearing animals immortal in image form. Photographing dead animals thus constituted an ironic gesture at preservation, offering a means by which Canadians simultaneously killed animals while regretting the creatures’ deaths. In photographing dead animals as trophies, then, Canadian sportsmen appealed to discourses of both mastery and mourning.

This chapter examines the political and cultural meanings embedded within practices of photographing dead animals in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. After briefly outlining the history of photography in Canada and discussing the ways in which historians have theorized photography’s historical significance, I analyze some of the earliest photographic images of dead animals that were produced in British North America in the 1860s by renowned
photographer William Notman. I then consider trophy photographs of dead animals taken in later decades of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth. The photographs analyzed in this chapter thus span from 1865 to the first two decades of the twentieth century, range from professional to amateur, and were produced, circulated, and consumed in a variety of ways. Notman’s photographs consisted of elaborate studio compositions that depicted various scenes of sport hunting, complete with taxidermied animal props. Owing to advances in photographic technology, trophy photographs from the later nineteenth century and the early twentieth century were captured outside the studio, within the dominion’s forests. These photographs included those of William J. Topley, a professional photographer and amateur sportsman who had once worked for Notman, as well as the many images of hunters with their dead quarry that circulated through sporting magazines such as Rod & Gun in Canada and through the published narratives of big game hunters discussed in the previous chapter.¹

In tracing the shifting practices of dead animal photography, from Notman’s 1860s studio depictions of hunting scenes to early twentieth century trophy shots captured in the Canadian wilderness, I seek to point out the ways in which such images contributed to processes of nation-building and empire-building in Canada and exposed Canadians’ ambivalent and paradoxical relationship with modernity. William Notman’s photographs contemplated Canada’s role as a settler colony within the British Empire by depicting visual elements of British hunting culture, using images of animal death to

¹ I am not concerned here with practices of camera hunting, which refers to the turn-of-the-century trend of substituting camera for gun and stalking animals as a way to capture a live photograph of the creature as a trophy, emphasizing the human presence in the pursuit of the photographic trophy. Nor am I concerned with the later practice of wildlife photography, which similarly sought to snap photos of live animals in their natural environments, this time, as opposed to camera hunting, seeking to minimize human presence. For a fascinating discussion of these practices of animal photography, see Matthew Brower, Developing Animals: Wildlife and Early American Photography (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
stake a claim to imperial fraternity. Later, turn-of-the-century photographs of dead animals were captured within the Canadian wilderness as trophies intended to authenticate sportsmen’s claims to mastery over fierce animal, as visual evidence of Canadians’ ability to make space for agricultural settlement and colonial expansion through killing wildlife. Canadians used photography to reiterate the patriarchal and imperial aspects of sport hunting, but they also used the camera as a representational tool of preservation, indicating their sense of regret over declining animal populations. In an effort to explain how the desire to kill animals and the desire to preserve animals coexisted within a single photographic frame, I suggest possible rhetorical tropes and visual codes contained within these images that concealed the more bloody aspects of animal death while also affirming human superiority over animal.

The specific contexts in which photographs were produced, the forms through which they were circulated, and the manner in which they were consumed are necessary factors to consider in any meaningful analysis of historical images. Whereas William Notman’s studio photographs were produced as art, as material objects to be viewed by discerning men and women versed in the technical and compositional intricacies of the medium, the images taken by amateur photographers, typically sportsmen eager to document their exploits, were intended to function as trophies, as visual testimony of one’s woodcraft and one’s hunting prowess. Such photographs hung on sportsmen’s walls, appeared in personal photo albums, and adorned the pages of sporting periodicals. For these hunters, photographs of dead animals functioned as a form of authentication and documentation, providing a visual counterpart to narratives of exploration and conquest. The images, as trophies, also performed a memorial purpose, sustaining one’s
recollection of the event, and finally, such photographs served a narrative role, facilitating the telling and retelling of the moment of animal death over time. Photographs of dead animals in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada thus circulated in a variety of ways and were produced in multiple settings.

As Canadian historian of photography Joan Schwartz has observed, photographs operate in intertextual environments and, as such, their production and reception is shaped by other “pre-texts of looking.”2 While the ways in which Canadians understood the meaning of these photographs were necessarily subjective, then, their readings of the images were likely informed by contemporary political discourses and cultural concerns regarding humans’ relationships with nonhuman animals. The intertextual context of viewing thus provides a means of reconstructing the possible ways in which men and women may have received photographic images of dead animals. For instance, some of William Notman’s studio photographs resemble images contained within the hunting narratives of renowned British big game hunters, indicating the ways in which Notman’s photographic illustrations of animal death spoke to contemporary concerns over Canada’s status as a settler colony within the British Empire. Many of the trophy photographs from the later years of the nineteenth century were printed in the popular Canadian sporting magazine Rod & Gun in Canada and were thus consumed by the exclusive community of sportsmen discussed in chapter two. As such, these images’ reception was likely shaped by the discourses of mastery, extinction, and sentimentalism and by the broader cultural and political concerns over masculinity and empire that were evident in big game hunters’ textual narratives. My readings of the following photographs, then, are informed

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by this intertextual viewing environment as well as by the content of the images themselves, and point to the ways in which photographic practices materialized the multivalent themes contained within animal stories and hunting narratives.

**The Photographic Medium: History and Historiography**

Photography first emerged in Europe in 1839, and as contemporary observers increasingly embraced the new representational medium that seemingly offered a “mechanically transcribed truth”, photographic technology underwent rapid evolution, and new types of cameras and techniques of plate development proliferated. The first photographic process, daguerreotyping, created non-reproducible, highly detailed images, whereas calotyping or talbotyping, invented shortly after the emergence of the daguerreotype, produced multiple copies of a photographic image, though with much less detail than daguerreotypes. The invention of the wet collodion negative process enabled photographers to combine the clarity of the daguerreotype with the reproducibility of the calotype; however, photographers still had to develop the wet negative plate immediately following exposure, which meant that one essentially had to have access to a darkroom at all times, rendering field photography difficult and laborious, particularly for amateur photographers.

The advent of gelatine dry plate technology in the early 1880s liberated photographers from the constraints of cumbersome wet plate processing and allowed men and women to take the camera outdoors. The market was subsequently flooded with new types of cameras and plates that were cheaper, simpler, and more accessible to the general public than were earlier camera models. The popularity of photography in

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Canada encouraged amateurs to form photographic clubs and societies such as the Toronto Amateur Photographic Association (later renamed the Toronto Camera Club) in 1888; similar clubs existed in smaller Canadian cities as well.\(^5\)

Further technological developments encouraged popular engagement with photography. The invention of snapshot shutters enabled photographers to capture objects in motion by drastically reducing exposure times, which was particularly useful for those seeking to capture images of wild animals in their natural environments. Smaller, more portable handheld cameras, too, encouraged Victorian men and women to take photography out of the studio and into the wilderness. The advent of George Eastman’s Kodak system severed the taking of photographs from the developing of prints and was promoted with the slogan “[y]ou press the button, we do the rest,” which suggested that anyone could enjoy photography without having to learn the science of lenses, chemicals, and processing techniques.\(^6\) Finally, the development of halftone technology in the final decades of the nineteenth century allowed photographs to be reproduced infinitely in newspapers and magazines, which, as historian of photography John Tagg observes, “changed the entire economy of image production,” permitting limitless circulation of photographs and rendering images disposable.\(^7\) The first news magazine to reproduce photographic images in Canada was the *Canadian Illustrative News*, first published in 1869. This particular periodical used the ‘leggotype’ halftone process developed by

\(^5\) Ralph Greenhill and Andrew Birrell, *Canadian Photography: 1839-1920* (Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1979): 126; Ralph Greenhill, *Early Photography in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965): 30-34. Ralph Greenhill writes that although there were several known daguerreotypists in Toronto and Montreal in the 1850s, the calotype seems not to have caught on in Canada. Canadian photographers did, however, embrace a variety of other photographic types such as ambrotypes, tintypes, and the carte-de-visite image.


\(^7\) Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 56.
William Augustus Leggo, an engineer from Quebec. The *Canadian Illustrated News*, however, faltered after a few short years, and illustrated newspapers did not take off in Canada again until the refinement of halftone technology several years later.\(^8\)

Although some scholars have characterized the emergence of hand-held, rapid shutter cameras such as the Eastman Kodak as the democratization of photography, as a development that enabled the majority of the population to access new representational technology, other historians have argued that although increasing numbers of Victorian men and women may have used cameras, the popular use of photography was not, in fact, symptomatic of social and cultural inclusion. In *Framing Identity: Social Practices of Photography in Canada, 1880-1920*, a socio-cultural assessment of the photographic practices of four women in turn-of-the-century Canada, Susan Close highlights the medium’s ability to foster social inclusion. Characterizing photography as a social practice rather than as an artistic endeavour, Close suggests that although these women photographers were marginalized in their respective environments, they used the camera as a means of creating an identity in a male-dominated society. Mattie Gunterman, for instance, a pioneer woman who worked as a mining camp cook in the interior of British Columbia, used the camera as a way of cultivating a strong, heroic, pioneer identity.\(^9\) In contrast with typical portraits of women from the nineteenth century, Close argues, which depicted female subjects as frail domestic creatures, Gunterman photographed herself in outdoors settings, as the dominant figure in her family, and as a pillar of her frontier

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\(^8\) Greenhill and Birrell, *Canadian Photography*, 126.
\(^9\) Susan Close, *Framing Identity: Social Practices of Photography in Canada, 1880-1920* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2007): 22. Close’s analysis positions photography as a way for these women to insert themselves into dominant narratives of progress and development, yet the author fails to acknowledge the ways in which such acts perpetuated other forms of exclusions, particularly those tied to processes of colonialism and racial othering in Canadian history.
community. Close also characterizes Gunterman’s landscape photographs as a means through which she inserted herself into male narratives of exploration and conquest. Other women photographers, in Close’s analysis, differed from male photographers when photographing First Nations peoples, desiring to promote an ethic of shared humanity rather than conveying a more violent, masculine form of cultural othering.\(^\text{10}\)

John Tagg interprets photography less as a tool of social inclusion and more as a Foucauldian technology of oppression, arguing that photography was used by elites as an instrument of surveillance, discipline, and control and, thus, that it promoted socioeconomic inequality. Tagg also argues that middle-class use of photography was largely confined to familial and recreational spheres and was thus disciplined by the demands of modern capitalism in its encouragement of endless consumption.\(^\text{11}\) Tagg emphasizes the ways in which the development of photographic technology in the second half of the nineteenth century was intimately linked with changes in practices of governance such as penal and educational reform and with the growth of human sciences such as psychology, medicine, and sociology. Photography provided the state with a visual means of regulating the population, functioning as a technology of quantification and measurement, one that individualized and separated subjects, disciplined their bodies, and controlled their behaviour. “The camera was never merely an instrument,” Tagg declares, “[i]t arrives on the scene vested with a particular authority; authority to arrest, picture, and transform daily life,” a power he characterizes as an “apparatus of the local state,” which seeks to guarantee the image as truth.\(^\text{12}\) Tagg’s emphasis on the ways in which photographic practice has historically reproduced hegemonic structures of power is

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 105.
\(^{11}\) Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 18-20.
\(^{12}\) Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 150.
also a critique of Roland Barthes’s writings on photography. In particular, Tagg seeks to challenge Barthes’s suggestion that in analyzing photographic images, “‘the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation,’”13 hoping to position the medium more as an instrument of domination than as a tool of validation.

In “The Rhetoric of the Image” and in Camera Lucida, his widely cited tracts on the meaning of photography, Barthes grapples with the difficulties of using photographs as historical evidence and argues that the power of photography is ultimately referential, in that one cannot deny that the subject of a photographic image has existed at some point in time: “The noeme of Photography is simple, banal; no depth: ‘that has been.’”14 The essence of the photograph, according to Barthes, is “to ratify what it represents,” thus proving “that something in the past has been there.”15 While Barthes thus posits a meaningful link between the photograph and its referent, Tagg rejects this connection and argues instead that photographic practice “guarantees nothing at the level of meaning,” since it is subject to human interpretation at various stages of production and reception. Photography, according to Tagg, does not just reflect things as they are but in fact constitutes social reality.16 Tagg’s emphasis on the ways in which photographs constitute social reality and do not simply reflect pre-existing social relations is crucial in analyzing photographs of dead animals in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada. Such images produced Canada as a colonial nation, one forged through the killing of wild animals, acting as a visual counterpart to sport hunters’ claims to mastery.

13 Quoted in Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 1.
15 Ibid., 85.
16 Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 3.
Historians have long debated the ways in which nineteenth century observers understood the nature of photography. Did Victorian men and women perceive the medium as a transparent, objective means of reproducing truth and reality in image form? Could a mechanical device capable of creating mass-produced images re-present nature authentically? Although a few scholars have suggested that nineteenth century observers perceived photography as an absolutely objective means of reproducing reality, as the very embodiment of truth, others have argued that Victorians were well aware of the constructedness of the medium and of the many ways in which photographic images were subject to human intervention and manipulation. Both professional and amateur photographers themselves were keenly aware of the various ways in which the medium was subject to human interventions and, by the late nineteenth century, contemporary observers debated methods of producing truthful representations of nature in their photographs, despite their ability to distort or alter images.

Nature photographers in particular were enthusiastic about the ability of photography to allow urban dwellers, alienated from nature, to experience authentic wilderness and animals in image form, and cautioned their colleagues to follow strict standards of objectivity in their practice. Admitting that “the camera can be made to lie,” for instance, Leverett White Brownell, author of a 1904 manual on amateur photography, argued that the camera could also create images that were “absolutely true to life…and showing the subject exactly as it was when the shutter was snapped…by no other means can the wild life be so truthfully portrayed.”17 Other photographers similarly emphasized the need to maintain clear standards of objectivity and non-intervention in photographic

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practices. Photographer Edward J. Bedford echoed the sentiments of Brownell by highlighting the dangers of artificial photographic processes. Bedford cautioned photographers to “be sincere” in their work, to “never represent a thing a palm off anything as to make up or manufacture subjects,” to guard against “any ‘faking’ of this kind.”

*Rod & Gun in Canada* contained a section in each monthly edition that was dedicated to the practice of amateur photography in which authors similarly argued for the establishment of standards designed to render the medium as objective as possible, indicating their awareness of the ways in which photography was capable of being staged, manipulated, and altered. Hubert McBean Johnstone, the first editor of this section, often warned about the dangers of over-touching photographs and argued that photographers must be carefully attuned to such things as lighting and posing, but in a way that conveyed the truthfulness of the subject and the particularity of the scene. As Johnstone wrote in an article entitled “Insincerity in Photography,” a photograph ought to be “a literal transcript of nature.” The author continued to allow some “hand work,” that is, retouching of photographs, “provided it is used as a help to the securing of some effect that is aimed at…for here it is often possible to get a truer picture than could be produced by straight photography.” In permitting some use of retouching as a means of securing an overall effect of literalness, Johnstone concluded that “it seems to me that the aim of every photographer should be to depict the subject of his picture as nearly like itself as possible.” The author thus positioned the very definition of “a photograph” as the “literal transcript of nature,” arguing that the secret to successful photography was its


ability to convey not just the physical, perceptual details of everyday life but was also its capacity to evoke emotional responses, and cautioning readers that one should not sacrifice objectivity for the sake of emotional effect.

Although Johnstone’s dictate—to depict a subject “as nearly like itself as possible”—appears relatively straightforward, the ways in which contemporary photographers used terms such as “literal,” “truthful,” “authentic,” and “honest” to characterize photographic objectivity were widely debated. Much of this discussion stemmed from the popularity of a distinctive style of photography that emerged in the nineteenth century known as pictorialism. Advocates of pictorialism argued that it was more important to convey emotion and sentiment through photography than it was to produce objective representations of reality. Pictorialist photographers employed a variety of techniques such as soft focus lenses, atmospheric lighting, and suppressed details in order to evoke a kind of ethereal, atmospheric effect. This mode of photography was opposed by advocates of “straight photography” who emphasized a more traditional focus on clear detail and compositional balance. Straight photographers argued that photographs ought to be well composed and properly exposed and developed, claiming that photography was not a form of artistic expression but was a means of accurately and truthfully recording people, events, and places as they really existed.20

Johnstone’s suggestion that some retouching ought to be permitted in order to get a “truer” picture than “straight” photography indicates a kind of middle ground between pictorialism and straight photography that seems to have been commonplace in turn-of-the-century Canadian photographic culture. Allowing some photographic manipulation as

a means of evoking emotion and conveying the essence of the subject, Canadian sportsmen photographers opposed extensive retouching as contradicting the authenticating power of the medium. In trying to create objective representations of nature, then, contemporaries used highly contested and subjective photographic vocabularies. The issue of photographic objectivity, and the ability of the camera to produce faithful representations of nature, was increasingly important to sportsmen in the late nineteenth century who desired to use images of dead animal prey as visual authentication of their exploits killing animals in the Canadian wilderness.

Yet in the earlier years of photography, active manipulation throughout the photographic process was accepted as legitimate practice and did not detract from an image’s status as a faithful representation of nature. The following section examines a collection of photographs that depicted scenes of killing animals produced inside the studio of William Notman in the 1860s and 1870s, analyzing the ways in which Notman’s photographic representations of animal death defined a particular image of Canada as a settler colony within a British imperial context. Notman’s work used artistic and atmospheric effect rather than photographic literalness to constitute a distinctive image of Canada, indicating the ways in which a photograph could be received as authentic in its capacity to evoke a particular emotional response. Produced at a time when knowledge of animal extinction was minimal, when the mass slaughter of animals was celebrated as an integral component of British imperialism, Notman’s photographs indicate the ways in which English hunting culture shaped Canadian perceptions of the landscape.
William Notman, Dead Animal Photography, and British Hunting Culture

One of the earliest professional photographers working in Canada during the second half of the nineteenth century was William Notman, a Scottish immigrant who established a photography studio upon his arrival to Montreal in 1865. Notman’s biographers characterize his artistic style as “tending toward abstraction and simplicity of design” and argue that the photographer sought to convey the essence of his subjects while also positioning them as heroic figures, thus balancing a desire for simplicity with an inclination toward storytelling. Working prior to the advent of gelatine dry-plates, photographers such as Notman practiced almost exclusively in studios, making use of elaborate accessories, props, backgrounds, and staging as a means of “elevating the art of photography.” Notman’s ornate studio compositions, for instance, gained notoriety around the world. Composite photographs were laborious, painstaking, collage-like creations in which sitters posed individually, the resulting images were then cut out and pasted onto a painted or photographed background in an intricately planned placement. The composite image itself was then photographed to produce the final result.

Notman also produced several photographs that depicted big game hunters posed with their animal trophies. Such images combined elements of British imperial hunting culture with nineteenth century characterizations of the Canadian landscape as a site of rugged, snowy wilderness. Consider, for instance, two such photographs that depict a hunter, Campbell McNab, posed with his hunting trophies, taken in 1873 in Notman’s studio. In one image, McNab stands in the center of the photographic frame, leaning on

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his gun, surrounded by multiple moose carcasses. In another photograph, the elite hunter is sprawled on his side in a leisurely pose, head on bent arm, again surrounded by furs, antlers, and dead animal carcasses. The images of McNab with his trophies resemble photographs contained within contemporary English sportsmen’s texts, which often depicted the hunter posed amongst a massive array of trophies collected from all corners of the Empire as testament to British imperial might, during a time when concerns over animal extinction were not yet common and when sheer quantity of animal death signified British conquest. These imperial hunting photographs represented dead tigers in particular as emblematic of English power over colonized regions; Notman’s photographs, by contrast, are distinctly Canadian in their inclusion of local animals, namely moose and elk—animals that were perceived in the English mind as definitive of the Canadian landscape, as lords and monarchs of the colony’s forests. The photographs of McNab, then, appealed to the visual iconography of British big game hunting and to English aesthetic and literary conventions as a way of defining Canadians as virile settlers capable of mastering the fierce wildlife contained within the sparsely populated regions of the colony, thus reiterating Canada’s place within the powerful British Empire, an empire forged through killing animals.

In addition to images that celebrated a kind of explicit, ostentatious display of human mastery over animals such as those depicting McNab and his trophies, Notman

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produced photographic images that narrated hunting stories in a more sentimental kind of way, combining themes of dominance with a romanticized representation of the Canadian landscape. Two photographic series in particular depicted a group of hunters in various stages of an excursion into the wilderness, taken in one of the photographer’s studios decorated with fake snow banks, ice, trees, and taxidermied animals. Each series depicts a succession of images that constructs an elaborate hunting narrative. The first of Notman’s hunting series, entitled “Cariboo Hunting,” depicted big game hunter, Minister of Agriculture and Colonization, and railroad promoter Colonel William Rhodes, his hunting companion, and his indigenous guides, in a setting intended to represent a region one hundred miles north of Quebec City, as they embark on their excursion, spot their prey, kill the animal, and return to civilization. Particular photographs include The Hunter, a portrait-like profile of the sportsman seated on a bank of snow, axe in hand, caribou carcass lying beside him, The Chance Shot, an image of the hunter and his partner crouching near some trees, gazing to the side, the head of a dead caribou in front of them, Hunters Resting, a photograph of the hunter and his partner seated, gazing down at the caribou carcass in front of them, the hunter’s hand on the animal’s antlers, and The Guide, a portrait of one of the young men, kneeling in the snow, gazing directly at the camera with a faint smile on his face, grasping the antlers of the caribou in his hands.26

The second series, “Moose Hunting and Trapping,” depicts similar scenes. The Old Hunter shows a man’s profile, kneeling, rifle in hand, an animal carcass beside him, while Early Morn, the Alarm, depicts one hunter and two guides sitting outside a tent that is adorned with animal pelts. Night Scene, Asleep, pictures the men sleeping at night, four

lying against the tent, one man sleeping upright, and The Object of the Hunt: A Thirsty Moose depicts the head of a moose, obviously taxidermied, peering through some bushes. Moose Hunting: Death of Moose is a sentimental contemplation of animal death, representing the group of hunters posed in a funereal manner around the dead body of the moose. Finally, The Return illustrates the hunter and his guides back at the tent, the carcass of the moose lying on the ground. Similar to the “Cariboo Hunting” photographs, the images in “Moose Hunting and Trapping” are carefully staged, making use of elaborate costumes and props.\footnote{William Notman, Moose Hunting Series, available online through the McCord Museum of Montreal: http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/keys/virtualexhibits/notmanstudio/}

These photographs appear oddly contrived and obviously constructed to modern viewers. The Object of the Hunt: A Thirsty Moose, for instance, the only photograph lacking human figures and the only effort to represent the moose as though alive, seems particularly artificial and manufactured. In this image, a large bull moose is shown emerging through some bushes, according to the caption, in search of water. The moose is obviously taxidermied; its eyes are glassy and shiny, not focused on anything in particular, while its head is positioned at an odd, unnatural angle. The head is also strangely large when considered in relation to the trees that obscure his body and the artificial clouds that dot the sky behind him, while the manner in which light reflects off the moose’s antlers and off the fern in front of him suggests the presence of overhead lighting. The Chance Shot also appears bizarrely staged to modern viewers. In this image, the hunter and his companion crouch beside the head of a large bull caribou, snowshoes on the ground beside them. But although the animal’s disassembled head is lying in the snow directly in front of them, the men are gazing out into the distance, beyond the
animal they have supposedly just killed and butchered, which renders the scene ambiguous. At what exactly are the hunters so intently gazing? Do they even see the caribou head in front of them? Are they the killers of the animal? The contrived positioning of human figures and animal props, then, is an obvious indicator of human intervention in the photographic process.

But despite the seeming artificiality of these photographs, mid-nineteenth century men and women would not necessarily have read them as inauthentic because of their elaborate staging and use of taxidermied props. Charles Millard has pointed out that animal and human figures in mid-century photographs were used to evoke the particular atmospheric tone and emotional quality desired by the photographer.28 Similarly, Matthew Brower has analyzed how early Victorian photographers used subjects, props, and backgrounds to enhance the picturesque qualities of a particular scene, desiring to convey a specific atmosphere rather than striving toward photographic realism based upon a purist notion of non-intervention in the production process.29 Notman’s biographers suggest that although these photographs are carefully contrived and make use of artificial props and backgrounds, “the effect in the photos is one of authenticity,” since Rhodes and his companions, as well as other sportsmen subjects, used their own clothing, snowshoes, and guns as props, and since Notman decorated the scene with lines of real dried fish and actual animal carcasses. Although the photographs appear “stilted to modern viewers,” the authors continue, the images caused an international sensation, 

captured top prizes in exhibitions, and sparked enthusiastic and positive commentary in photographic journals. As one contemporary American critic described the series in *The Philadelphia Photographer*, “[n]ature has been caught—not napping—but alive! Out of doors has been brought indoors with the elements, and photographed…Patience, artistic taste, knowledge of nature, and above all, study and *brains* were required to make them, besides nice manipulation.”\(^{30}\) As the observations of Millard, Matthew Brower, and others suggest, then, authenticity in nature photography at this time was achieved through atmospheric effect rather than through appeals to human non-intervention in the photographic process or through definitions of photographs as literal transcriptions of reality.

Notman’s hunting series thus appealed to British hunting culture and used atmospheric effects to position Canada as an outpost of the British Empire, a colonial periphery where virile hunters could cultivate a particularly English kind of moralism and gentility by killing animals. As Canadian historian Joan Schwartz has noted, Notman’s photographic series comprised “part of a larger performance of identity through which the virile attributes of the British imperial male were expressed and moral worth was acquired through ‘contact with Nature’ and the gentlemanly pursuit of sport hunting.”\(^{31}\) Notman’s photographs constituted a means of furthering the spread of English civilization to the remote parts of the Empire. The images were tales of romance and adventure, appealing to a distinctively Victorian penchant for drama, presenting a kind of

\(^{30}\) Quoted in Hall *et al.*, *The World of William Notman*, 19.

\(^{31}\) Canadian historian Joan Schwartz has described Notman’s images “as part of a larger performance of identity through which the virile attributes of the British imperial male were expressed and moral worth was acquired through ‘contact with Nature’ and the gentlemanly pursuit of sport hunting.” See Joan M. Schwartz, “Photographic Reflections: Nature, Landscape, and Environment,” *Environmental History* 12 no. 4 (October 2007): 977.
sentimental contemplation of humans’ mastery over wild animals, mirroring, in many ways, the moments of sentimental and empathetic identification between hunter and prey contained within the pages of big game hunters’ textual narratives.

The development of photographic technology toward the end of the nineteenth century enabled sportsmen to take their cameras out of the studio and into the forest, allowing hunters to appeal to discourses of realism and photographic objectivity as a means of authenticating their claims to mastery over ferocious beasts. Circulating within a context increasingly aware of animal extinction, however, these later images did not celebrate the mass slaughter of wild animals in ostentatious displays of imperial might as do Notman’s McNab photographs. Turn-of-the-century trophy images of dead animals did elaborate on some of Notman’s pictorial conventions, particularly the sentimental themes of mourning and empathetic identification between human and animal contained within photographs in the moose and caribou hunting series. But these later photographs used sentimentalism less as a way of romanticizing the Canadian landscape in British aesthetic tradition and more as a means of invoking discourses of preservation. Canadian sportsmen constructed the act of photography itself as one of benevolent protection that ensured traces of vanishing animals could be rendered immortal in representational form; such photographs thus embodied a more subtle kind of domination over animal, one that combined themes of mastery with elements of regret over animal death.

**Trophy Photographs: Hunting Souvenirs and Animal Objectification**

Practices of photographing dead animals, and experiences of viewing such images, contributed to the spread of empire in the worlds of ordinary Victorian men and women. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the photograph as trophy gained
increasing cultural currency as validation of one’s skills as a hunter, providing a visual component to the intimate association between big game hunting and processes of colonialism. In *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, historian James Ryan argues that photography facilitated the reproduction of British imperialism in several ways. Photography reinforced popularly held perceptions of colonized regions as sites of death and disease and took possession of landscapes, visually marking such spaces as British territory.\(^{32}\) Ryan argues that photographs of animals taken in colonial settings were as much about consolidating hierarchies of power as they were about capturing animals and points to the ways in which the iconography of human possession of nature and superiority over animals infused photographic practices, naturalizing the cultural and political conquest of empire. “Despite its claims for accuracy and trustworthiness,” Ryan writes, “photography did not so much record the real as signify and construct it…photography did more than merely familiarize Victorians with foreign views: it enabled them symbolically to travel through, explore, and even possess those spaces.”\(^{33}\) Trophy photographs of hunters’ dead quarry thus provided more than a simple visual dimension to the intimate connection between big game hunting and processes of colonialism; as Ryan’s analysis suggests, these images also allowed viewers to participate vicariously in the killing of nonhuman beings, complete with its imperial and patriarchal implications.

As trophies, some hunters’ photographs were fairly explicit in their depictions of animal objectification. The images contained within big game hunter Frederick Selous’s narrative of his travels in Canada, for instance, emphasized the ways in which the animals

\(^{32}\) Ryan, *Picturing Place*, 20, 44.

had been shot and killed specifically for their trophy parts, especially for their heads and antlers. In one such photograph, a moose is lying on the ground, quite obviously dead. The animal is not positioned to gaze into the camera, nor is its body prominently displayed. Instead, the animal carcass lies in a way that highlights the massive size and spread of the antlers, a photographic representation of the beast that mirrors the title of the image, *A Wonderful Head.* Photographs of dead animals such as this indicate the ways in which hunters perceived wild animals as objects whose death bestowed considerable cultural capital upon their killers.

Some photographs of dead animals taken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries depicted the graphic, physical processes of animal fragmentation and disassembly, and thus constituted a blatant visual rendering of human mastery, dominance, and conquest over animal. Consider an image contained within the August 1908 edition of the popular hunting and fishing periodical. Entitled *The Despatcher at Work,* this photograph depicts a man gutting a large male deer that has been tied to wooden scaffolding by his rear legs. Although sport hunters’ narratives often described processes of animal disassembly and butchery in neutral, detached, and scientific language, rarely is the process of butchery depicted photographically, perhaps testifying to the power of visual images to render textual narratives more real and immediate. Another notable image appears in the March 1908 issue of *Rod & Gun in Canada* and is called *Paunching a Thirty-Two Pointer.* In this photograph, three men kneel over a dead bull moose that has been rolled onto his back, legs splayed in the air. Each man is

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involved in the process of paunching the moose; that is, disemboweling the animal. The moose has already been skinned, and the hunters appear oblivious to the presence of the camera, intently focused on the task at hand. These photographic representations of animal disassembly legitimized the violent consumption of such creatures in their failure to present animals as sentient or living beings.

Photographs depicting processes of animal butchery and disassembly were less common trophies than were images that represented animals whose bodies had already been fragmented into antlers, heads, and skins. In such images, the animal has been transformed into a trophy as well as a consumer good. The dead animal is in its most instrumentalized state, no longer possessive of a coherent body. Photographs contained within the narratives of big game hunters H. Hesketh Prichard and Frederick Selous, for instance, reiterate themes of human mastery in their depiction of human figures displaying the antlers and heads of recently killed game animals. In a photograph entitled *The Great Moose Shot on Sept. 18, 1904*, one of Frederick Selous’s guides is shown standing behind the carcass of a large bull moose. The animal is lying on his side, his head facing away from the camera and reaching toward the background of the photographic frame, having been already severed from the his body. The guide gazes into the distance while holding the animal’s head, already skinned and cleaned, up to the camera, framed on either side by the magnificent antlers. Other photographs in Selous’s narrative depict the hunter’s guides and companions standing amidst assemblages of

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animal heads and antlers, parts that have been severed from the animals’ bodies and are thus no longer suggestive of sentient life. These types of images thus functioned as extensions of material trophies—the physical body parts of the animal—reminding viewers of humans’ power over the lives of nonhuman beings. These kinds of photographs also functioned as a double removal of animal subjectivity; not only has the animal recently been killed by the hunter as well as skinned, butchered, and disassembled, it has also been consumed through the photographic medium itself. As Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, and others have argued, photography instrumentalizes the subject of its gaze, rendering photographic subjects available for the possessive and consuming gaze of viewers. The reproducibility of photographic images at this point in time, as well as the durability of trophy photographs as material objects, moreover, provided multiple occasions in which viewers consumed animal bodies.

Trophy photographs of disassembled animal carcasses also objectified animal subjects in their emphasis on classification and quantification, terms of measurement that further encoded the parts of dead animals as trophies with social and cultural value beyond their economic value. Big game hunter W.A. Baillie-Grohman frequently discussed the animals he killed in terms of antler size or degree of palmation, and included photographs of antlers in various poses, positioning the photographic quantification of these animal parts as a means of proving his worth as a hunter. A photograph entitled The Largest Moose Antlers on Record, for instance, depicts a man standing beside a set of antlers that are propped up vertically, with a measuring tape.

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37 Selous, Recent Hunting Trips, 256.
stretched from one tip of the antlers to the other. The antlers of this creature are taller than the man himself, who is dwarfed by the gigantic horns. The animal has been reduced to a measurement (seventy-eight and a half inch spread with forty-three points, to be exact) that signified the skill and might of the hunter. Some photographs of trophy animal parts depicted the disassembled, fragmented hides, horns, and heads of dead animal bodies in piles so large that individual animals were indistinguishable from one another, a powerful testament of the human ability to master animal and an authentication of the rhetoric of hunting as demonstrative of one’s imperial and patriarchal might.

**Turn of the Century: Photography, Animal Extinction, and the Preservationist Paradox**

Alongside such themes of human mastery, however, existed another, more complex and contradictory meaning of photographic images of dead animals as trophies, indicating the multivalent ability of historical photographs to embody a variety of possible readings. Evident in both the subject matter of these images—in the content of the photographs and the accompanying texts—and in the actual act of photographing animals itself, themes of regret over the disappearance of wild animals and nostalgia for earlier times in which animals had been abundant became increasingly common toward the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, thus reiterating the paradoxical logic of animal stories and hunting narratives that combined desires to kill animals with desires to protect animals. These mournful photographs typically depicted hunters posed beside their dead prey, head lowered as though ashamed of the act of violence they have just enacted against the creature. The accompanying text oftentimes lamented the increasing extinction of animal populations, which suggests both an

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individual sense of regret over the deaths of animals as well as a broader societal recognition of human culpability over the vanishing state of these wild beings. Consider a remarkable image that appears in the pages of sportsman, taxidermist, and natural historian William Temple Hornaday’s hunting narrative *Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies.* In the image, Hornaday’s hunting companion Jim Phillips is posed beside a massive grizzly that Phillips has just killed. The bear is lying on the ground with its head stretched toward the foreground of the frame, its face turned slightly from the camera, providing viewers access to the bear’s massive profile and body. The animal’s head is resting gently on the ground, while one of its front paws has been placed in a manner that highlights its long, ferocious claws. Phillips is kneeling beside the bear, his cap lowered as though in a gesture of tribute to the animal. The hunter is gazing down at the mighty creature with a seeming look of shame on his face, while the caption reads “Mr. Phillips Regrets the Impending Extinction of the Grizzly Bear.” The juxtaposition of such notions of guilt and mourning with the themes of human mastery—Phillips has, after all, just killed the bear—is both striking and unsettling.

While craving the sense of pride in one’s mastery of nature that big game hunting offered, then, sportsmen also experienced a deep sense of regret over taking animals’ lives; Hornaday’s text itself elaborated on this contradictory tension between the desire to kill animals and the sense of guilt over hunting. The author often spoke out against killing animals and promoted an ethic of preservation, yet the naturalist continued to hunt, justifying the killing of wild animals in the name of science. In *Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies* Hornaday lectured readers on the ethics of preservation, declaring his

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support for legislative measures such as bag limits and hunting licenses designed to protect particular animal populations. Still, Hornaday proceeded to kill a large number of animals on this particular excursion, recalling the need to discipline his ever-present impulse to kill. “Would I be strong enough to resist temptation?” the naturalist contemplated while lusting over the bodies of two nearby goats. “After a long survey of the animals, I said ‘Get thee behind me, Satan!’ Resolutely I turned my back upon them.”\textsuperscript{41} The photographic trophies of other sportsmen expressed a similar sense of sentimental nostalgia over the disappearance of animals. Such images typically shared common characteristics: a hunter stands, rifle prominently displayed in hands, beside the carcass of an animal that he has presumably just shot and killed. Rarely does the man gaze into the camera; more often, the hunter is gazing down at the dead animal. The creature is typically posed with its head reaching toward the foreground of the image, antlers or claws prominently displayed, which demonstrates not just the might of the hunter in his ability to overcome such a fierce beast, but also constructs the creature as a menace to human civilization and thus functions as a justification of killing, a means of easing sportsmen’s guilt over the act of hunting itself.

Consider a photograph that appeared in the January 1906 edition of \textit{Rod & Gun in Canada} that looks very much like an updated version of William Notman’s studio series. This particular photograph, entitled \textit{A Forest King Has Fallen}, depicts four hunters and guides kneeling around the dead body of a large bull moose. Two of the men are standing behind the animal, their legs bent, each gazing down contemplatively at the creature. One of these men is leaning against his rifle, the other two are kneeling in front of the moose, their backs toward the camera. The bulk of the moose’s body is not visible, hidden

\textsuperscript{41} Hornaday, \textit{Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies}, 151.
behind the two hunters kneeling in front of him, but the dead creature’s head is
prominent, framed by the snow in front of him and the men around him. The human
characters appear obviously posed, the composition staged and artificial, and the caption
overly sentimental; the “forest king” has simply “fallen.”42 The photograph is funereal in
nature, the human figures positioned as though mourning the death of a loved one,
gathered around the fallen animal as though paying their final respects and bidding
farewell. The composition of the photograph is suggestive of human mastery over animal
as well as sentimental regret at the deaths of such animals, as evidenced in the content of
the image itself as well as when considered in its intertextual context, alongside hunters’
narrative and textual expressions of regret over animal extinction. As such, one possible
reading of images like A Forest King Has Fallen evokes the contradictions and ironies of
modernity. Sportsmen understood the need to accommodate the advances of urban-
industrial modernity, yet they desired to do so in ways that enabled them to retain a sense
of power and that continued to express nostalgia for earlier times.

A photograph in a separate issue of Rod & Gun in Canada illustrates these themes
well. In this particular image, a moose is lying on his side, one hind leg and one fore leg
in the air, his belly exposed to the camera, while a man stands beside him, positioned as a
detached observer to the scene of death. As opposed to many hunting photographs that
display the animal’s trophy parts prominently, the moose’s antlers are difficult to detect
in the frame. The photograph is entitled Wire Fence Killed the Moose; additional textual
information provides further information on the creature’s death: “a tragedy of the woods
near Fort William, showing how poorly the wild things live under modern improvements.
The moose met a railway fence, became entangled in the wires, could not escape and

42 Rod & Gun in Canada 7 no. 8 (January 1906).
slowly starved to death.” The text thus acknowledges the intrusion of human technology into spaces inhabited by wild animals, the tone of the image and the content of the text lamenting human culpability in the ongoing assault of urban-industrial modernity upon animal populations. Sitting in awkward juxtaposition to trophy photographs in a periodical dedicated to the circulation of triumphant visual depictions of human mastery over animal, this particular photograph exposes turn-of-the-century Canadians’ growing awareness of the destructive force of human civilization.

Efforts to photograph these rapidly vanishing remnants of animals were thus also attempts to preserve the disappearing creatures for future reference. In her analysis of historical efforts to photograph wild animals, cultural theorist Susan Sontag writes that “[g]uns have metamorphosed into cameras in this earnest comedy, because nature has ceased to be what it always had been—what people needed protection from. Now nature—tamed, endangered, mortal—needs to be protected from people. When we are afraid, we shoot. But when we are nostalgic, we take pictures.” Sontag’s observations are intriguing when applied to turn-of-the-century hunting trophies, which reflected a simultaneous desire both to kill and to photograph and thus indicated the coexistence of fear and nostalgia. Practices of photography reflected Canadians’ desire to preserve traces of animals, but their impulse to hunt and kill reveals their unease with modernity. These sportsmen were not killing because they felt threatened by the animal itself, as Sontag

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43 Rod & Gun in Canada 6 no. 6 (Nov 1904): 515.
44 Early support for conservation stemmed from this mournful acknowledgement of animal extinction and human culpability in declining animal populations; contemporary observers lamented extinction as one of the “saddest features of history,” as a piteous feature of human intervention into nature; yet, they also believed that such processes were an inevitable feature of urban-industrial modernity. See the various articles and commentaries contained in Gordon C. Hewitt, The Conservation of the Wild Life of Canada (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921): 17-24.
45 Sontag, On Photography, 15.
suggests, but were hunting because they feared what the animals signified—challenges to settlement in a colonial landscape.

Other scholars have similarly examined nineteenth century men’s and women’s interactions with animals amidst urban-industrial development, exploring the connections between representational technologies and human-animal relations. In his classic essay “Why Look at Animals?” John Berger argues that amidst late nineteenth century processes of modernization, men and women became increasingly alienated from nonhuman beings, losing contact with real, physical, embodied animals and instead encountering spectral images of animals in commodified form. The proliferation of animal imagery, Berger maintains, indicates a nostalgic feeling of loss, an effort to recapture a sense of connectedness to nature that was becoming more distanced, more exploited. “Animals are always the observed,” Berger writes of the escalating marginalization of animals in modernity. “The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are.”46 While Berger acknowledges the significance of visibility in shaping relations between human and animal, then, he does not believe that these relations are equal within conditions of modernity, conditions in which animals are increasingly constituted as objects of knowledge and as consumer goods. The proliferation of photographs of animals in the late nineteenth century, in Berger’s analysis, was thus symptomatic of humans’ sense of alienation from authentic nature.

Akira Mizuta Lippit agrees with Berger’s thesis concerning the cultural consequences of animal extinction. In Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife, Lippit argues that animals exist in a constant state of vanishing. Similar to Berger, Lippit suggests that the marginalization of animals amidst the growth of urban-industrial capitalism in the late nineteenth century and the reappearance of animal figures in representational form—in art, in photography, in zoos—was indicative of collective efforts to mourn the disappearance of animals.\(^{47}\) In contemplating the ways in which philosophers have characterized the nature of animality, as well as how practices of animal photography represent the killing of animals and the passage of time, Lippit argues that both conventional western philosophy and photographic practice refuse animals the ability to die. Philosophically, Lippit contends, animals have been denied subjectivity because of their apparent lack of rationality and language and, consequently, the death of individual animals is subsumed within the life-cycle of the entire species, which continues to exist. Since animals have not been regarded historically as individual subjects, the death of an animal is “dispersed throughout the pack,” and therefore, the animal survives philosophically within the continued survival of the group.\(^{48}\)

Lippit contrasts the supposed inability of animals to die with the death of humans, whose “existence is founded on the metaphysics of the individual.”\(^{49}\) As such, human death marks the utter and complete demise of that particular subject. Comparing photographed subjects to animals, the author also argues that, just as individual animals cannot die, neither can photographed subjects. The medium itself thus facilitates a kind of


\(^{48}\) Ibid., 172.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 173.
perpetual existence. “Undying, animals simply expire, transpire, shift their animus to other animal bodies,” Lippit concludes, citing the observations of George Bataille that animals therefore lack the consciousness of death and the ability to identify living animals from dead animals, noting that “[a]nimals thus function as the incarnation of a technological fantasy—perpetual motion machines.” ⁵⁰ Lippit suggests that modern technology, particularly photographic technology, “can be seen as a massive mourning apparatus” that represents an ironic tribute to the disappearance of animals. ⁵¹ Since animals cannot die yet are continually vanishing, Lippit summarizes, they have to be displayed through other, non-corporeal forms, namely through technological representation.

Other scholars have criticized Berger’s and Lippit’s respective efforts to connect themes of animal disappearance and mourning with the expansion of representational technologies. Film historian Jonathan Burt has argued that Berger and Lippit reinforce conceptually what they describe historiographically and that scholars ought to search for evidence of human-animal kinship rather than obsess over human alienation from nonhuman others. ⁵² In his study of animals in film, Burt seeks to highlight animal agency and argues that, while subject to human representational practices, animals have always been able to actively gaze back at humans. Suggesting that representations of animals in film and photographs should not be interpreted as a nostalgic substitute for more real or authentic engagements with actual animals, Burt argues that practices of animal representation can in fact provide a means of understanding humans’ relationships with nonhuman beings. In particular, Burt writes that such representations can promote a more

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⁵⁰ Ibid., 187-188.
⁵¹ Ibid., 189.
ethical treatment of animals and can thus encourage human-animal kinship without fostering a sense of distance between human and nonhuman beings. Not all historical efforts to represent animals through the camera were acts of mourning or expressions of guilt over human incursions into nature; practices of animal representation carried a host of varied meanings, some of which encouraged a greater sense of kinship.\(^{53}\)

Similarly, in *Developing Animals*, his study of early wildlife photography in America, Matthew Brower similarly criticizes the tropes of alienation and extinction present in the works of Berger and Lippit, suggesting that their characterization of animal photography as an act of mourning is itself “a compensatory fantasy haunted by desire for an unmediated relation with animals,” a “flight from the animal” that reinforces notions of human-animal separation in an act of mourning.\(^{54}\) Berger’s and Lippit’s respective theories, according to Brower, contribute to the tropes of vanishing and extinction that they seek to criticize.

Although Burt and Brower are astute in pointing out some of the conceptual weaknesses of Berger’s and Lippit’s respective theories regarding the historically complex relationship between photographic representation, animal extinction, and modernity, to say that late nineteenth century observers mourned the disappearance of animal populations is not necessarily to reiterate conceptually the physical processes of alienation between human and animal. Lippit’s argument that animals cannot truly die does deny nonhuman beings individual subjectivity, while Berger’s characterization of animal disappearance and re-appearance in commodified form neglects to consider the continued presence of actual animals in everyday life. But turn-of-the-century Canadian


\(^{54}\) Brower, *Developing Animals*, xvi.
social commentators, hunters, and journalists certainly perceived animal populations to be vanishing. They lamented the decline of wild animals from the nation’s forests and expressed a guilty sense of regret over the ways in which modern urban-industrial civilization precipitated such processes of extinction, thus acknowledging their culpability in the mass deaths of nonhuman others. Due to such fears of extinction, Victorians characterized photography as a means of ensuring the continued survival of wild animals, even if only in image or representational form. Photographs of animals, even dead animals, functioned as a tool of preservation that sought to enable the survival of animals for present and future years. Preserved in this way, photographs of dead animals further objectified nonhuman beings; in addition to their status as trophies demonstrative of particular hunters’ power, these images also constituted animals as objects of knowledge, as specimens for future study.

Historian Elizabeth Edwards has examined late nineteenth century efforts to record historical and ethnographic elements of British culture, a trend known as salvage ethnography, and has argued that photography was a key tool in salvage ethnographers’ repertoire. Amidst a rapidly urbanizing and industrializing world, Victorian men and women feared the loss of traditional cultural ways as well as natural environments, which prompted two complementary impulses: a desire to record the rapidly vanishing vestiges of folk culture and landscapes, and the impulse to classify, order, and catalogue the world. Photography, as a medium popularly construed as one capable of mechanically reflecting reality if practiced correctly, formed an essential part of this preservationist agenda. “The archaeological imagination and, specifically, the salvage agenda resonates throughout much photography of the late nineteenth century,” Edwards writes.
“Photography was the salvage tool par excellence, with its indexical insistence and spatial and temporal projection that presented the past in the present.”55 Cultural theorist Susan Sontag has similarly argued that turn-of-the-century men and women used photography to ease the seeming chaos of rapid social and cultural change, hoping to position photographic images as evidence of a world that they feared was on the verge of collapse.56

The desire to photograph vanishing things, then, followed an ironic logic that was similar to popular characterizations of hunting regulations as acts of preservation. Victorian observers, fearful of the decline of animal populations, sought to capture these vanishing creatures by any means necessary before they disappeared forever, and they used photographic technology to freeze animal remnants in time. As Alan Trachtenberg has written of photography’s seeming ability to stall the passage of time, “[t]he photograph’s mirror-like ability to capture the moment and preserve its uniqueness made the camera seem (as it still does) a near magical device for defeating time, for endowing the past with a presence it had previously had only in memory. The immediacy of lived experience frozen forever and forever recoverable: this came to seem the domain of the photograph.”57 Actual animals might disappear, but these creatures could be preserved in the present and the future through representational technology. As one contemporary photographer wrote, “a photograph of any animal life that is now common may at some future time be of extreme value to naturalists, for we can never tell how soon any of the

56 Sontag, On Photography, 15-16.
mammals or birds may become extinct.”58 Photography was thus a means of preserving a dying world. But despite hunters’ efforts to preserve traces of wild animals through the medium of photography, and regardless of their sentimental expressions of guilt and mourning over the disappearance of animals and over their role in causing animal extinction, the animals in the photographs under consideration are, still, finally, dead. And as such, these particular animals have been objected, fragmented and disassembled, a morbid fact that coexists uneasily and somewhat ironically with hunters’ and photographers’ expressions of regret.

**The Paradox of Dead Animal Photography and the Erasure of Human Agency**

How can photographs of dead animals from late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada invoke notions of human dominance, violent conquest, and imperial mastery while at the same time signify themes of nostalgia, loss, and mourning over the decline of animal populations? Were contemporary observers aware of the paradoxical tension between the ways in which hunting animals and photographing their dead bodies as trophies and as specimens conflicted with their sentimental expressions of guilt and with their practices of mourning the very creatures they killed? How does one reconcile the seemingly contradictory interpretive possibilities contained within these images, one that emphasizes Victorians’ patriarchal and imperialist desire to master nature, subdue animal life, and conquer new lands, the other that highlights nineteenth century efforts to protect and preserve animal existence alongside a deep sense of loss over the disappearance of animals from daily life?

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58 Brownell, *Photography for the Sportsman Naturalist*, 7. Roland Barthes has similarly observed that photography links death with the photographic referent as an act of preservation and, as such, photographing a subject emphasizes the immediacy of death while also trying to forestall death by preserving the subject photographically. See Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 9-15.
The tension between themes of mastery and notions of guilt in these images is reconciled through a variety of photographic practices and rhetorical devices through which sportsmen and photographers obscured visual signifiers of human violence against animals while at the same time highlighting human power and might, thus presenting a kind of sanitized version of mastery. By concealing visual evidence of violence such as blood, wounds, or bullet holes, by depicting dead animals lying peacefully on the ground with no evidence of human intervention, by positioning animal carcasses to appear as though still alive, by depicting particular objects such as guns and apparel as visual signifiers of elite status and racial privilege, by picturing animal parts as objects for human consumption and not as the fragmented pieces of a recently living being, or by attaching animal death to positive descriptions of tourism and economic growth, Victorian men minimized their role in causing animal death and further entrenched hunting not as an act of killing but as a legitimate sport.

These visual codes allowed the paradoxical meanings of dead animal photographs to coexist in quiet tension, normalizing human violence against animal populations. While big game hunters boasted of their abilities to kill animals, then, they increasingly did so in ways that appealed to social legitimacy as societal awareness of the need for preservation mounted. Just as the sportsmen’s code defined appropriate and inappropriate behavioural etiquette in order to distinguish ‘hunting’ from sheer ‘killing,’ and thus to render animal death acceptable when enacted in particular ways by an elite group of men, so too did photographic practice employ particular rhetorical and visual tropes that positioned the act of killing wild animals as an acceptable pastime, one indicative of
social and cultural privilege. In doing so, these photographic codes obscured the actual violence involved in killing animals.\textsuperscript{59}

One of the most obvious techniques of minimizing awareness of the violent aspects of hunting, in translating the killing of wild animals into an acceptable pastime in an era of growing preservationist sentiment, was to remove human figures from the photographic frame altogether. Such photographs pictured dead animals lying on the ground as though peacefully sleeping and were often accompanied by captions that explained to viewers that the image had allegedly been taken without any human intervention: “just as he fell” or “as he lay.”\textsuperscript{60} Captions such as this constructed the animal’s death as a supposedly natural event and, alongside the image itself, ironically suggested that the hunter-photographer had played little role in either the death of the animal or the framing of the photograph. The removal of the human figure from the photographic frame suggested that the animal’s death had occurred naturally, allowing the hunter-photographer to present the image of the creature as a more subtle kind of trophy—viewers do not forget that the animal is still dead, the supposed peacefulness of its death notwithstanding—while also excusing his role in perpetrating the more violent aspects of the sport. This visual technique of minimizing the more bloody aspects of killing animals paralleled hunters’ narrative techniques of shifting from an active,

\textsuperscript{59} These cultural codes and rhetorical tropes could be considered analogous to Roland Barthes’s definition of the “stadium,” referring to the body of shared cultural knowledge and experience viewers of photographs draw upon to derive meaning from images. See Barthes, \textit{Camera Lucida}, 67. As mentioned, my reading of the images here is informed by Joan Schwartz’s emphasis on the intertextuality of photographic reception. I use the themes of human mastery and mourning contained within animal stories and hunting narratives as a guide to interpreting these photographs of dead animals, but this is not to say that alternative readings are not possible. Indeed, the very coexistence of themes of mastery alongside themes of mourning point to the many different meanings of the images themselves.

\textsuperscript{60} H. Hesketh Prichard, \textit{Hunting Camps in Wood and Wilderness} (London: W. Heinemann, 1910): 192
sentimental prose to a detached, passive, and mechanical voice at the moment of death and dismemberment.

Another photographic technique of minimizing the goriness of death was to conceal all evidence of blood or injury on the animal and to pose the creature as though still alive. Consider a series of photographs that depict a moose hunt in New Brunswick undertaken by an American sportsman, Dr. W.L. Munroe, in 1900. One of the images appeared several years later on the cover of the June 1908 issue of *Rod & Gun in Canada*. According to the accompanying article in the magazine, the moose had been the largest bull shot to date in the province. One of the photographs depicts the animal lying on the ground, his head facing toward the foreground so that his profile is visible to the viewer. Again, blatant visual signifiers of death and violence such as blood or injuries are hidden from view, and the creature is postured in a manner that makes him appear alive, his head propped up off the ground, one visible eye open as though actively gazing at the scene around him. The size and stature of the creature is enormous, particularly when compared to the human figure in the frame. This human, Munroe’s guide Charlie Cremin, is partially obscured by some brush behind the moose, his tiny stature rendering him difficult to detect upon first glance. Another photograph of the hunt depicts Cremin standing beside the moose, gazing down at the animal, hands on his hips. The guide’s figure is more prominent in this photograph, though he is still dwarfed in size by the body of the gigantic moose, whose carcass is arranged horizontally across the photographic frame, and whose head is again elevated, propped up by a branch under his right antler, his eyes gazing directly into the camera.

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A third photograph in this series depicts the hunter Munroe with his companion Tom. The two men are standing directly behind the moose, gazing at the camera, one clutching a horn used for moose-calling, the other grasping a long rifle in his hand. The moose is not facing the camera, nor is he posed to appear lifelike. Instead, the bull is lying on his side, his head stretching toward the foreground of the image. While his antlers are prominently displayed, his face and eyes are now obscured. His gaze is no longer available for viewers to consume; only the two hunters can see the animal’s eyes. As opposed to the guide Cremin, these two hunters are gazing directly into the camera and are adorned with the symbolic visual markers of gentlemanly sport such as guns, horns, and refined clothing. Hunters’ guns symbolized one’s status within the elitist club of gentlemen hunters, as signifiers of patriarchal and imperial might; the presence of guns within the photographic frame defining its possessor as legitimate sportsman. Instruments of measurement and quantification also served as visual symbols of social, cultural, and scientific privilege. The inclusion of rulers, notebooks, and other scientific paraphernalia instructed viewers that the creature in question had been killed in the name of science and thus for the benefit of society more broadly, thereby justifying animal death at the hands of human hunters.

In photographing dead animals, then, hunters used a variety of tactics to construct hunting not as killing but as sport. The various things made visible—technologies of hunting as markers of one’s elite status, instruments of measurement and quantification as representative of one’s scientific inclinations—as well as the things made invisible,

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62 For an insightful discussion of the potent symbolism of guns in American hunting culture see Daniel Justin Herman, *Hunting and the American Imagination* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001): 148. As Herman notes, guns embodied a variety of cultural values, particularly those tied to notions of individualism, self-reliance, freedom from social obligation and restraint, and independence.
such as blood or other signs of suffering, struggle, or death, constituted a deeply contradictory visual code that rendered killing acceptable and that normalized wild animal death at the hands of human hunters. The various tropes of loss and regret depicted in some photographs of dead animals—the saddened look of sportsmen at the death of their prey, the funereal posturing of human figures as though mourning the animal—as well as accompanying captions and articles that contributed to the intertextual context of photographic reception that lamented declining animal populations, can also be seen as possible tropes that legitimized killing, containing the implications of such violence within the broader socially acceptable rhetoric of ‘hunting,’ ‘sport,’ and ‘preservation.’ But since photographs of dead animals were also trophies, designed to demonstrate hunters’ mastery and strength, these photographic techniques and symbolic codes did not erase evidence of human intervention altogether. Rather, they functioned to shape viewers’ interpretation of such imagery, rendering the killing of animals acceptable through appeals to imperialism and elitism. The elite sportsman, far from a bloodthirsty killer, self-positioned himself through photographic images of animals as a benevolent protector of wilderness, as one who “wouldn’t hurt a fawn.”

Images of dead animals were also used to sell hunting equipment and wilderness tourism to sportsmen and to those interested in outdoors recreation more generally. Although big game hunters were explicitly opposed to the commodification of game, as evident in the sportsmen’s code, particularly in its opposition to market hunting and pot hunting, sport hunting was itself an activity of leisure defined by the imperatives of consumer capitalism, an act that transformed wild animals into consumable objects. For many armchair sportsmen, the images of dead animals in sporting magazines such as Rod

63 Cover, Rod & Gun in Canada 7 no. 2 (July 1905).
& *Gun in Canada* functioned as a means through which they could participate vicariously in sportsmen’s virile exploits killing animals and conquering wilderness, the images thus functioning to commodify nature and wildlife in their circulation.\(^{64}\) These photographs enabled sportsmen to consume visually the animals killed by colleagues in other regions of the nation and parts of the world, contributing to the establishment of an international sporting elite and defining Canadian forests as sites of privileged consumer capitalism. The culture of big game hunting itself thus depended upon the circulation and consumption of images of dead animals, adding further irony to sportsmen’s claims to oppose the commodification of wildlife and wilderness; these hunters consumed the bodies of the animals, but they also consumed the images of the animals. The circulation of these photographs within the community of sportsmen restricted membership within the hunting elite to those able to understand the crucial differences between killing animals for sport and killing animals for survival, thus exposing the imperial politics that were at play in the production, circulation, and reception of sportsmen’s photographs of dead animals.

**Conclusion**

Photographs of dead animals provided a visual counterpart to the themes of nation, empire, gender, modernity, and extinction contained within animal stories and hunting narratives. William Notman’s 1860s and 1870s studio depictions of animal death used emotional and atmospheric effect and appeals to broader metanarratives of British hunting culture, celebrating an ostentatious kind of human mastery over animal as

\(^{64}\) For a discussion on the power of photography to commodify reality and on the intimate association between consumer capitalism and a culture of images see Sontag, *On Photography*, 153, 65. Sontag has also argued that the relationship between photography and tourism is inherently predatory, that the camera is a tool of dispossession used to document colonial conquest.
demonstrative of imperial might. Notman’s photographs used English pictorial conventions and intertextual appeals to British hunting narratives as a means of situting Canada as a settler colony within the British Empire, characterizing sportsmen as figures who furthered the spread of English civilization to the dominion’s wilderness. Later, turn-of-the-century trophy photographs taken by Canadian sportsmen in the dominion’s forests used the camera to authenticate their experiences killing Canadian animals, to produce visual evidence of their role as conquerors of colonial space. From Notman’s studio images to sportsmen’s outdoor snapshots, these images indicate the crucial ways in which dead animals continued to have constitutive power over notions of self and place long after the animals’ deaths, preserving the patriarchal and imperial meanings of sport hunting over time and across space.

Photographs of dead animals were riddled with a host of ambiguities and contradictions that indicated how human-animal relations in turn-of-the-century Canada were mediated by concerns over nation, empire, and gender, as well as by the advent of capitalist modernity and by the increasing availability of representational technologies. Although photographers and sportsmen used images of dead animals as trophies, as tangible evidence of their skills and prowess as hunters, they also sought to remove evidence of human violence and minimized the extent of human intervention into nature, reflecting a growing awareness of the imperatives of preservation. Acknowledging the reality of animal extinction and the culpability of humans in facilitating such processes of disappearance, these photographs also expressed a sense of guilt and mourning over the decline of animal populations amidst the advance of urban-industrial modernity. These turn-of-the-century photographs of dead animals were thus both an assertion and a denial
of human conquest of wilderness. While the act of photographing animals reflected a desire to preserve remnants of wildlife for present and future use, the death of these nonhuman others indicates Victorians’ tacit acceptance that actual animals could not survive the assault of industrial modernity and their belief that such beings would have to exist in photographic or representational form. These photographs are therefore also evidence of contemporary men’s and women’s perception of the imminent disappearance of various forms of animal life.

In contemplating the ways in which photographs join past, present, and future, historian Alan Trachtenberg writes that “[j]ust as the meaning of the past is the prerogative of the present to invent and choose, the meaning of an image does not come intact and whole.” Trachtenberg suggests that historians’ efforts to construct meaning from these photographic traces reveals the ways in which “photographs serve the present’s need to understand itself and measure its future.”65 Trachtenberg’s observations are useful in understanding why the multiple messages communicated through these images seem so contradictory to contemporary viewers, prompting us to consider how the impulse to kill animals could have coexisted so easily alongside the desire to protect these very same creatures in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada. This paradox was reconciled through various rhetorical tropes such as the behavioural conventions of the sportsmen’s code and the visual practices of dead animal photography, both of which reframed killing wild animals as a socially legitimate pastime. The rhetoric of protectionism, nostalgia, and mourning enabled Victorian observers to ignore the real, physical violence of sport hunting, much like present-day arguments to protect wild animals often obscures the mass exploitation of domesticated animals for human

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65 Trachtenberg, Reading American Photographs, xvi-xvii.
consumption. Photographic practices of representing dead animals in turn-of-the-century Canada, then, functioned as a means of creating a sense of distance between the animals we objectify and the animals we consume.

This process was also one of spectralization. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes refers to the experience of being photographed as the awareness of becoming a specter. Canadians’ practices of photographing dead animals were acts of transformation, translations of material animals into rhetorical, cultural animals. Hunting narratives and wild animal stories rendered animals textually into abstract, symbolic entities, while visual images of dead animals used technological media to position the carcasses of nonhuman beings as signifiers of anthropocentric cultural meanings. These processes severed the animal from its material referent in a gesture at preservationism and positioned photographs of animals as immortal objects capable of defeating the ongoing processes of extinction by which actual animals were disappearing from the Canadian wilderness. But even after their deaths, animals continued to hold constitutive power over Canadians, performing very real cultural and political work in shaping individual subjectivities as well as national definitions.

The following chapter explores a similar way in which Victorian Canadians attempted to render animals immortal; while photographic practices sought to freeze remnants of wildlife in the moment of death, taxidermic acts attempted to resurrect the bodies of dead animals, to recreate animality in a lifelike mimicry of nature. Taxidermy facilitated the circulation of animal bodies to broader audiences outside the community of sportsmen, from forests and swamps to workshops and homes, to museums, galleries, fairs, and international exhibitions.

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Figure 1. William Notman, *Mr. Campbell McNab and Hunting Trophies*. McCord Museum Archives, I-81219. Silver salts on glass. 1873.

Figure 2. William Notman, *Mr. Campbell McNab*. McCord Museum Archives, I-81218. Silver salts on glass. 1873.
Figure 3. William Notman, *Cariboo Hunting: The Chance Shot*. McCord Museum Archives, N-0000.57.6. Silver salts on paper. 1866.

Figure 5. William Notman, *The Object of the Hunt: The Thirsty Moose*. Library and Archives Canada. NPC-053. Silver salts on glass, 1866.

Figure 7. *Paunching a Thirty-Two Pointer, Rod & Gun in Canada*, March 1908.
Figure 8. W.A. Baillie-Grohman, *The Largest Moose Antlers on Record, Fifteen Years’ Sport and Life in the Hunting Grounds of Western America and British Columbia.*
Figure 9. William Temple Hornaday, Mr. Phillips Regrets the Impending Extinction of the Grizzly Bear, Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies.
Figure 10. A Forest King Has Fallen. Rod & Gun in Canada. January 1906.
Figure 11. Wm. Notman & Sons, *Dr. Munroe’s Moose for ICR, about 1900*. McCord Museum Archives. 4323.0. Silver salts on glass.

Figure 12. Wm. Notman & Sons, *Moose Hunting for ICR, about 1900*. McCord Museum Archives. 4323.0. Silver salts on glass.
Figure 13. *He Wouldn’t Hurt a Fawn*, *Rod & Gun in Canada*, July 1905.
4: Preserving Animal Death: Taxidermic Practice and Animal Immortality

In 1890 noted sportsman and taxidermist William Temple Hornaday reflected on the functions of taxidermy, observing that “the task of the taxidermist” was not simply to recreate animals in representational form but was to impart “the look of life. It is to recreate the animal…to give it all that nature gave it…It should be an exact copy.” Hornaday continued to emphasize the permanence of taxidermied objects, arguing that “the animal must be prepared to stand the test of time. It must not swerve from its poise; it must not shrink nor change its form,” thus constructing the preserved bodies of wild animals as items capable of defeating the ravages of time. Hornaday’s musings are a succinct summary of the various themes embodied within turn-of-the-century practices of taxidermy. In his emphasis on taxidermists’ duty to preserve animals from the ravages of urban-industrial development and from the destructiveness of time itself, Hornaday positioned taxidermy as a means of recreating vanishing forms of animals in an accurate, lifelike mimicry of nature. Through the taxidermic process of death, disassembly, and resurrection, then, naturalists such as Hornaday transformed wild animals into symbols of the human ability to master time, defeat mortality, and conquer nature.

After providing a brief history of taxidermy and discussing the ways in which the craft became increasingly professionalized in the final decades of the nineteenth century,

its practitioners seeking ever-greater levels of artistic realism and scientific legitimacy, this chapter analyzes how Canadians used taxidermy in response to their perceived alienation from wild animals, transforming living animals into material objects and cultural symbols. In particular, I analyze how animal bodies were preserved as hunting trophies, as museum specimens, and as ornamental objects such as stuffed birds and feathers used as trimmings for women’s hats. Each method of exhibiting animal bodies shared much in common, requiring the death and resurrection of animals in ways intended to defeat the ravages of time, each embodying a kind of translation, a transformation of living animals into material objects symbolic of distinctly anthropocentric concerns. The taxidermic preservation of animals as trophies, specimens, and accessories also signified a process of domestication, a means of transporting wild animals into the more intimate spaces of the home, the museum, and the body. Finally, each form of taxidermy revealed Canadians’ growing sense of alienation from the world of wildlife.

Still, turn-of-the-century observers responded to hunting trophies and museum specimens, on the one hand, and feather hats, on the other hand, in very different ways. These men and women perceived hunting trophies in sentimental terms, as nostalgic souvenirs that symbolized the disappearance of wildlife from the dominion’s forests amidst the onslaught of urban-industrial modernity; museum specimens, too, were characterized as objects capable of freezing processes of animal extinction. Nineteenth and twentieth century commentators also positioned trophies and specimens as emblems of patriarchy and empire. While hunting trophies provided material authentication of sportsmen’s claims to mastery in the manly contest against beast, museum specimens
used the supposedly objective rhetoric of science to naturalize violent processes of empire by displaying the capacity of settler-colonists to conquer the dominion’s wilderness and wildlife. But although trophies and specimens were valued for their ability to halt the ravages of modernity upon animal populations, taxidermied birds and preserved feathers used as trimmings on women’s hats were condemned as heartless and cruel intrusions into nature that facilitated animal extinction. Canadians’ sense of alienation from nature thus prompted varied responses to taxidermic practices of display, indicating how cultural notions of authenticity, modernity, gender, and capitalism mediated human-animal relations in ways that structured contemporary perceptions of the material object itself. Whereas trophies and specimens were perceived as masculine emblems of authentic engagement with animals, actively produced through immersion in the wilderness, bird hats were denigrated as tokens of artificiality, passively consumed by fickle women who evidently had no appreciation for nature.

Taxidermy was thus another means through which Victorian men and women articulated a sense of self and place. Preserving the bodies of hunted animals provided a way for sportsmen to participate in the colonial conquest of the nation’s hinterlands. Sport hunters’ trophies oftentimes formed the basis of local natural history museum collections, indicating how individual acts of killing animals became part of a larger performance of nation-building and empire-building in turn-of-the-century Canada. Emblems of patriarchy and colonial rule, the preserved bodies of dead animals defined Canada as a legitimate nation and as an emerging empire. At the same time, the specific ways in which Canadians defined themselves through dead animals—their rhetoric of identification with animal, their regret over animal extinction, their appeals to the
imperatives of science and preservation—were intended to combine elements of benevolence with notions of conquest.

The History of Taxidermy: Professionalization and Artistic Realism

Taxidermy, a derivative of the Greek words for ‘arrangement’ and ‘skin,’ dates to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when practitioners of the craft began to differentiate their work from earlier traditions of preserving and embalming dead bodies by emphasizing their ability to mount specimens in realistic, lifelike poses, for the purposes of ornamentation and scientific research. As one contemporary observer explained in a magazine article from 1879, modern techniques of taxidermy differed from earlier practices of embalming in “the arrangement or manipulation of the skins of animals; practically, the removal and preservation of skins, which are either placed, unmounted, in cabinets, for examination and study; or subject to the more complex arrangement of stuffing, mounting, and adjusting as near as possible to counterfeit nature’s likeness, and to express the characteristic habits of the individual.”

Taxidermy became particularly popular in the nineteenth century because of the convergence of several economic, political, scientific, and cultural developments. The industrial revolution and the advent of consumer capitalism produced a seemingly endless array of things to be accumulated, while the expansion of European empires offered a novel assortment of exotic goods to satisfy the growing metropolitan desire to consume. The entanglement of modern capitalism with empire allowed big game hunters and scientific researchers to collect and preserve animal bodies from around the world as trophies, specimens, and ornaments, which found welcome reception in both private homes and

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public institutions. At the same time, Darwinian theories of evolution changed the ways in which observers characterized human-animal relations, rendering questions of wildlife more pertinent, while processes of urbanization and industrialization prompted heightened awareness of environmental degradation. As a result, tokens of nature became particularly cherished collectibles. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then, constituted a golden age for taxidermy.

The popularity of taxidermy was certainly evident in turn-of-the-century Canada, a nation that boasted relatively abundant wild animal populations. A wide variety of contemporary periodicals, from farmers’ magazines to women’s journals to literary collections, contained advertisements for taxidermy schools and services, promising lay readers that “[b]oys, girls, men and women can do nice work from the start and can become expert in one week.” Academic and scientific periodicals included reviews of American and English taxidermy manuals and printed articles that explained the techniques of the craft to lay audiences. These articles illustrated the transnational circulation of knowledge and specimens within a broad community of naturalists, thus revealing an extensive network of taxidermic practice within which ideas and objects crisscrossed international borders. Sportsman, taxidermist and nature writer Ernest Thompson Seton used the pages of scientific magazines to instruct Canadian readers on the intricate procedures of taxidermy, acknowledging the popularity of sport hunting in Canada and suggesting that amateur hunters would derive much more enjoyment from

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5 *The Canadian Druggist* 11 no. 3 (March 1899): advertisement.
their sport if capable of preserving specimens for their own education and enjoyment.\textsuperscript{7} An English immigrant who resided in late nineteenth century London, Stephen Mummery, was likely typical of local taxidermists. Mummery established a thriving taxidermy shop and was a member of London’s local history society, building up a private collection of specimens that evolved into the town’s first natural history museum.\textsuperscript{8}

The craft of stuffing and mounting animals was also popularized through a variety of trade manuals and periodicals. These texts provided instructions to sportsmen and naturalists on all aspects of the taxidermic process, from methods of collecting specimens, to techniques of skinning and preserving carcasses, to means of displaying completed mounts. After outlining lengthy lists of the various tools, implements, and equipment required by the amateur taxidermist such as knives, forceps, arsenic, and wire rods, authors advised readers on the proper methods of collecting, on how to hunt with the preservation of animals’ bodies in mind. Authors such as William Temple Hornaday instructed naturalists to remember that they ought not injure an animal more than necessary, not in order to minimize the animals’ suffering but in order to prevent blood and entrails from damaging the specimen. As he cautioned, “[s]hoot to kill, but shoot so as to get your specimen with the least possible mutilation.”\textsuperscript{9} Taxidermists explained how to remove and preserve the heads and skins of animals while in the wilderness by soaking

\textsuperscript{7} Ernest Thompson Seton, “Our Canadian Birds,” \textit{The Canadian Science Monthly} no. 5/6 (July/August 1884): 75-8.

\textsuperscript{8} William Judd, \textit{Early Naturalists and Natural History Societies of London, Ontario} (London: Phelps Publishing Company, 1979): 106. William Judd has observed that many taxidermists were listed in city directories for Southern Ontario and Eastern Canada, thus Mummery is likely typical of taxidermists in Central Canada. City directories from the West do contain several listings as well, but, as George Colpitts has pointed out, few Western Canadians were likely to make their living from taxidermy owing to the continued importance of wildlife for subsistence in that region. See Colpitts, \textit{Game in the Garden}, 79.

\textsuperscript{9} Hornaday, \textit{Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting}, 13.
such parts in a mixture of salt and alum, and reminded readers that taking careful measurements of the creature’s body and recording details on its physical appearance was absolutely crucial if one hoped to reproduce a lifelike mount.\textsuperscript{10} These manuals then provided detailed, explicit instructions on how to skin the creature and how to remove its bones, eyes, tongue, and brains. Such graphic directions were typically written in detached, medical language as a means of positioning the act of disassembling and recreating dead animal bodies as a legitimate, scientific endeavour.\textsuperscript{11} Taxidermists’ rationalization of the methods of animal dismemberment and resurrection, then, enabled them to claim the mantle of scientific authority and allowed them to evade charges of butchery.

Taxidermists instructed readers how to remove particular organs, how to extract and preserve bones, and how to prepare preservative solutions such as arsenical soap as a means of protecting specimens against the ravages of time and the destruction of insects. These manuals explained how to fashion wire manikins for larger quadrupeds and how to create an artificial body by wrapping cotton around the frame or by using clay to fill in the creature’s skin. Finally, nineteenth century taxidermy manuals outlined the numerous, detailed tasks involved in finishing the specimen, from inserting glass eyes, to washing and combing fur, to filling lips with clay, to modeling fake tongues. Authors such as Hornaday emphasized the imperative of meticulous finishing work to ensure a properly finished specimen, arguing that “[t]here is no inferno too deep or too hot for a slovenly,

\textsuperscript{11} See, for instance, Hornaday, \textit{Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting}, 28.
slatternly taxidermist” and that the downfall of most practitioners was their “lack of patience and the dogged stick-to-itiveness that conquers all difficulties.”

In the 1880s, North American taxidermists took great pains to promote the professionalism of their craft, publishing tracts that described the scientific and technical aspects of taxidermy, holding exhibitions to demonstrate their skills, and forming an official society as a claim to increased legitimacy in the scientific world. Much of the impetus toward professionalization was spearheaded by William Temple Hornaday, who desired to challenge older styles of taxidermy that did not pay as great attention to artistic detail and scientific accuracy as the naturalist desired. Hornaday criticized conventional natural history museums for maintaining uninteresting and unrealistic specimens and for failing to convey the true essence of nature. Other taxidermists, too, bemoaned the lack of creativity in museums’ taxidermic groupings. Yet these authors were also optimistic about recent innovations in the field. As one taxidermist noted, “the museum of old, which did not always encourage the best art, has since passed, and the scientific museum, which calls for the best and a great deal of it, fortunately for taxidermy, has taken its place.”

Taxidermists also sought to professionalize their practice by fostering a greater sense of fraternity and cooperation. Hornaday in particular implored his colleagues to share techniques and secrets with one another in order to transcend the secrecy and professional jealousy that had conventionally characterized the practice and that had

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13 J.B. Holder, “Amateur Taxidermy,” 44.
prevented the collaboration of taxidermists in the past. As noted taxidermist John Rowley wrote in his turn-of-the-century manual, “[i]t is a fact much to be regretted that many taxidermists, by reason of their extreme jealousy and narrowness of mind, are exceedingly loath to communicate new ideas and discoveries to their fellow-workers. But, thanks to the more general enlargement and increase in number of scientific museums of late years, a number of men of genius and education have taken up the study of the art.”¹⁴ Hornaday was more scathing in his criticism of the secretive nature of taxidermy, disparaging those who guarded their secret methods and personal recipes as obstructing the progress of scientific investigation itself: “[a]t present most taxidermists are fiercely jealous of each other and outsiders, and guard their little knowledge as a miser hoards his gold…If painters and sculptors had always been as narrow-minded, jealous, and absurdly exclusive of their knowledge as we have ever been, their art would stand no higher to-day than ours.”¹⁵

As the observations of Rowley and Hornaday suggest, taxidermists desired to position their practice as a highly refined art as well as a legitimate scientific endeavour. Authors of manuals emphasized the wide variety of skills demanded by the craft, arguing that a successful taxidermist must have all the abilities of the sportsman in order to

¹⁴ Rowley, *The Art of Taxidermy*, v. This rhetoric on cooperation and fraternity contrasts sharply with the prefaces to earlier tracts on taxidermist practice, which cautioned readers of the need to guard their newly acquired knowledge. For instance, in the introduction to his manual, taxidermist Walter P. Manton wrote in 1882, “here we are at last. Please turn the key in the door—to keep all inquisitive priers out—for the process into which I am about to initiate you is something of a secret, shrouded by the thin veil of mystery.” Or similarly, as S.H. Sylvester introduced his manual in 1865, “As common things lose their charm, so is it more particularly in this art. A person having this work should not leave it exposed to the eyes of the curious. Work by yourself that none may know the mysteries of the art, unless they are willing to pay for the information, as you yourself have done” (no page). See Walter P. Manton, *Taxidermy Without A Teacher: A Complete Manual of Instruction for Preparing and Preserving Birds, Animals and Fishes* (Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1882): 13; S.H. Sylvester, *The Taxidermist’s Manual: Giving Full Instructions in Mounting and Preserving Birds, Mammals, Insects, Fishes, Reptiles, Skeletons, Eggs Etc.* (Middleboro: Gazette Print, 1865): inset.

collect specimens, must possess the knowledge of the field naturalist and the laboratory scientist in order to mount animals in realistic poses and to understand the quantification of data and the composition of chemical solutions, and, finally, must cultivate the skills of the fine artist in order to render the object as lifelike as possible. Taxidermy, then, was the ultimate amalgam of science and art. Scientific research enabled greater standards of realism, while artistic attention to detail encouraged more authentic exhibits. As one author wrote in an article in *Science*, “[t]axidermy is hardly recognized as one of the fine arts, yet. Perhaps it may never be. But the truthfulness of representation, and the artistic effects of posing and grouping which ‘mounted’ animals may exhibit, can often invest such work with an interest for those who may not be much included toward taxidermy for the sake of skin-preserving.” In the fusing of hunting, anatomical disassembly, scientific cataloguing, and artistic recreation, taxidermy had thus risen above the mere act of stuffing dead animal skins to become a truly noble art. “If he who transfers to canvas an animal’s form, or carves it in the enduring stone, is an artist,” wrote Frederic A. Lucas of taxidermy’s artistic nature, “I think that he who evolves from a shapeless skin a creature having the semblance of life is entitled to be called an artist also. And that taxidermy is artistic which preserves not merely the form, but catches the spirit also, or, in the case of birds, reveals their beauties, to the best advantage.”

Taxidermists thus argued that high levels of professionalism, artistic ability, and scientific credibility enabled them to recreate wild nature in authentic, permanent forms. These men explained that the true aim of taxidermy was to resurrect the essence of

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animals, to recreate life itself, or “to hold the mirror up to nature, and faithfully reproduce the forms and expressions of animals.” Taxidermists sought to construct their specimens in postures as lifelike as possible, and their manuals were filled with commentary on the absolute necessity of achieving utter lifelikeness and realism. “In short,” William Temple Hornaday wrote on realism in taxidermic practice, “do everything you can that will give the specimen the look of a living animal. If it looks stuffed, put it in the darkest corner of your cabinet, and try another.”

Taxidermist Davie Oliver similarly contemplated the imperative of taxidermy to mimic nature as truthfully as possible, cautioning readers, “do not allow your mounted specimens to look like stuffed ones. Make them such marvels in symmetry of form and expressive in character of attitude that the most critical will declare that ‘this is truly art of a higher order.’ The song or the cry of the birds and their movements may be lacking, but let every other element which enters into their structures stand out as life-like as it is in your power to make them.”

Across the various genres of taxidermic practice, artistic skill, professionalism, and scientific accuracy were essential. Whether the specimen was destined to be mounted over the fireplace of a wealthy big game hunter, enclosed within glass cases in a natural history museum, or perched upon a woman’s hat as a signifier of high fashion, taxidermic processes of disassembly and resurrection sought to recreate as truthfully as possible the intricate essence of wildlife in forms designed to defeat the passage of time.

20 Hornaday, Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting, 126.
21 Oliver, Methods in the Art of Taxidermy, 122.
Hunting Trophies: Collecting, Masculinity, and Elitism

Canadian sportsmen, similar to their English and American counterparts pursuing big game in the dominion’s forests, desired to preserve the bodies of hunted quarry as trophies. Such objects were tangible proof of the hunter’s mastery over animal, the very materialization of his imperial and patriarchal domination. Sportsmen’s narratives and periodicals contained many images of these hunters posed with their respective collections of trophies, typically the severed heads of antlered animals mounted on wooden shields, as material testament to humans’ ability to kill animals and to conquer nature. As opposed to photographic representations of dead animals as hunting trophies, which concealed visual signifiers of human violence such as blood but did not, in most cases, go to great lengths in order to depict animals as though still alive, taxidermic trophies were stuffed and mounted in ways designed to recreate lifelike appearance. But as with the physical embodiment of sport hunting’s varied meanings, taxidermied animal trophies also carried messages that were oftentimes contradictory. Similar to photographic trophies, stuffed animals reflected naturalists’ desire to conquer wildlife and master the natural environment, but at the same, these objects also indicated humans’ sentimental efforts to protect the very animals they desired to kill.

Sportsmen in turn-of-the-century Canada thus cherished the taxidermied heads of male, antlered animals as testament to their hunting prowess, seeking the largest and finest horns from as many species of animals as possible. These hunters carefully measured, quantified, and compared trophies as a means of gauging the extent of their skill and virility, a practice that also fostered the development of an international community of sportsmen. This network of sportsmen maintained communication through
a variety of publications, establishing standards and guidelines of quantification that enabled naturalists to compare specimens from around the globe. The noted English taxidermist Rowland Ward, for instance, authored a text in 1896 that was dedicated to “the sportsmen of the world,” written in order “to start a record of Horn Measurements of the Great Game of the World.” That is, Ward’s text was written not as a scientific treatise per se but rather as a point of reference to which sportsmen around the world could compare their trophies. *Records of Big Game and Measurement of Horns* contained an exhaustive list of horned animals from all corners of the earth and catalogued a variety of typical measurements such as height, weight, length of particular body parts, antlers, number of points, and so on. This effort to establish a transnational framework of measurement carried imperialist overtones, fusing Western desires for global conquest with the scientific impulse to catalogue the world’s animals. Sportsmen thus assessed particular trophies against others of the same species; each carcass within a personal collection of taxidermied animals was both singular and archetypal, representing the hunter’s personal encounter with an individual animal while also symbolizing the essence of a species more broadly.

Historian Susan Pearce has argued that personal collections such as hunting trophies contain meanings that extend beyond the material object, that the act of collecting is itself an indicator of anxiety over broader social change. As such, collections embody a desire to retain a sense of power and control, the objects constituting a link between the physical world and the dreams and anxieties projected onto them by the

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collector. Pearce defines the accumulation of hunting trophies as an act of souvenir collection, defining souvenirs as objects that narrate one’s life history, that represent experiences their possessors desire to carry forward into the future, and that function as a tangible bridge from past to future. Trophies materialize cultural attitudes toward animals and thus reflect hunters’ fantasies of virility and prestige in physical form.\textsuperscript{24} Pearce’s emphasis on the nostalgic character of souvenir collecting echoes the sentiments of Canadian sportsmen and taxidermists who justified practices of hunting and collecting amidst increasing awareness of animal extinction through appeals to preservationism. In particular, naturalists argued that taxidermic practice facilitated the continued survival of threatened forms of wildlife into the future, thus interpreting trophies as a material way of preserving a social order that appeared to be vanishing.

Canadian sport hunters’ nostalgic efforts to preserve traces of wildlife in material, representational form, then, expressed their belief that wild animal populations were declining. Amateur taxidermist L.H. Smith, a self-proclaimed naturalist who had been born in England but raised in Canada West, reflected wistfully on the once-abundant game populations in Southern Ontario in the pages of his taxidermy manual, \textit{A Sportsman’s Taxidermy and a Sportsman’s Photography}. According to Smith’s colleague, the sportsman had grown up in a time of animalistic abundance and plenty. Smith himself nostalgically described the particular circumstances surrounding the collection of each trophy in his home, recalling where the animal had been killed, how the chase had occurred, and the manner in which he had mounted the specimen. Smith’s sentimental reflection on his past life of adventure spent collecting trophies in Canadian

\textsuperscript{24} Susan M. Pearce, \textit{Museums, Objects, and Collections: A Cultural Study} (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1992), 66, 71.
forests was an act that projected anthropocentric meanings onto the objects themselves, allowing the sportsman to narrate his life history through the souvenirs in ways that glorified earlier, simpler times.

For sportsmen such as Smith, taxidermied animals functioned as tokens of memory, prompting recollection of earlier years of superabundance, when wild animals had been plentiful, when the seemingly inevitable barrage of human settlement had yet to destroy hunters’ grounds. “Alas, alas!” Smith lamented the loss of his boyhood hunting grounds, “the march of civilization, the bane of the sportsman, has destroyed that ground; our town has covered the site.” Characterizing his collection of trophies as the envy of his friends, Smith noted that each and every object was a source of pride and joyful memory. “Every case and nearly every specimen in it brings to my memory some pleasant event of my out-door pleasures,” Smith reflected sentimentally. “My collection records prominently many pleasant events which are entered into the pages of my written and mental diaries of more than thirty years with dog and gun in the forest.” Hunting trophies thus prompted reminiscing upon past adventures in the wilderness, positioning the present as a time of overcivilization in which the forces of urban-industrial modernity hindered one’s ability to experience authentic nature, and hunters’ desire to collect trophies as material emblems of their youth signified a wish to arrest the passage of time.

Cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard characterizes the fetishistic desire to possess particular objects as akin to sexual perversion, pointing out the ways in which the fixation on specific parts of objects fragments the item, much like the sexual objectification of women reduces them to “a couple of breasts, a belly, a pair of thighs, a face—according

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26 *Ibid.,* 47.
to preference.” The fetishization of particular parts of an object indicates the ways in which those parts define the identity of the collector; hunters’ fetishization of specific animal parts, for instance, most notably horns and antlers, was a reflection of their desire to fashion an identity as conqueror of nature, enabling them to construct elaborate fantasies of themselves as patriarchal and imperial masters of the natural world. The horns and antlers of wild bucks and stags represented the most threatening parts of the animals’ bodies. The sharp, phallic-like protrusions used in combat against other male foes were dangerous body parts that were potentially able to reverse the hierarchy of power between hunter and hunted and dismember the sportsman. Consequently, collectors’ obsessive desire to accumulate these particular parts of the animal—parts that carried relatively little practical or use value, as opposed to skins or furs—indicates the complex rhetorical process by which the abstract imperial and patriarchal connotations of hunting as physical practice became embodied, rendered tangible and durable over time.

Other theorists have similarly emphasized the ways in which historical practices of collecting constituted a gesture of mastery and conquest over the world around oneself, particularly in response to perceived social and cultural change. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal have characterized the act of collecting as an attempt to control the external world, suggesting that “[t]o collect up to a final limit is not simply to own or to control the items one finds; it is to exercise control over existence itself through possessing every sample, every specimen, every instance of an unrepeatable and nowhere duplicated series. It is to be unique.” Baudrillard has similarly defined collecting as “an enterprise

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of abstract mastery whereby the subject seeks to assert himself as an autonomous totality outside the world” and has argued that since the objects one collects define the self, one’s collection can never be finished, lest one risk death of the self. Such definitions are fitting descriptions of sportsmen’s desire to collect trophy parts of the animals they killed, a practice that enabled them to cultivate a sense of mastery over animal as well as a sense of control over the broader forces of social and cultural change—the condition of overcivilization—that wild animals symbolized in the antimodernist climate of turn-of-the-century Canada. Trophy collecting allowed big game hunters to cultivate a distinctive sense of self as defenders of a many, Anglo-Saxon order.

Baudrillard also suggests that this kind of fetishistic collecting eases anxiety over awareness of human mortality and one’s impending death. Arguing that collectors use their objects in order to ensure the continuity of life, Baudrillard positions collected items as means through which their possessors mourn their own deaths while simultaneously denying the immediacy of death. Humans construct the object as an emblem of mourning by “integrating it within a series based on the repeated cyclical game of making it absent and then recalling it from out of that absence.” The “cyclical game” to which Baudrillard refers describes the endless cycle of satisfaction and dissatisfaction one derives when accumulating another item for one’s collection, only to realize that the collection is still incomplete. This process, he argues, enables one to accommodate notions of death, since the permanently incomplete state of one’s collection ensures the

30 Mark Simpson has argued that collecting taxidermied hunting trophies enabled men in turn-of-the-century Canada to cultivate a distinctively masculine, Anglo-Saxon identity, one that was shared by sportsmen on both sides of the Canadian-American border. See Mark Simpson, “Immaculate Trophies,” Essays on Canadian Writing 68 (Summer 1999): 77-107.
continued survival of the subject. This symbolic relationship between collecting and dying is particularly poignant when applied to collections of hunting trophies. Taxidermied animals were resurrected to mimic lifelikeness in a gesture to defeat death in a multiple sense: the death of the particular animal, the death of the animal’s species as a collective whole, and the death of the collector whose identity is rendered immortal through the items. The taxidermic process of death, disassembly, and resurrection was thus an ironic effort to defeat both human and animal death.

But despite sportmen’s use of taxidermied animal trophies as a means of asserting social and cultural power and as a way of cultivating an elitist identity, these naturalists were also aware of growing societal resentment toward practices of hunting and collecting. Just as big game hunters used the sportmen’s code of conduct as a behavioural way of legitimizing the act of killing wild animals and obscured visible evidence of violence in their trophy photographs of dead quarry, those men who preserved their trophies in taxidermied form justified such acts by appealing to the ideals of science and preservation. In Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies William Temple Hornaday expressed a sense of guilt not just over the hunting of wild animals, but also over the killing of such creatures for taxidermic purposes. The naturalist suggested that one could repent for such misdeeds by maintaining the highest possible standards of artistic practice and scientific endeavour, writing that “if you must go and kill things, save their heads and mount them as an atonement for your deeds of blood,” as a kind of homage to the animal and as a continual source of pride and pleasure.32

Hornaday continued to argue that collecting trophies ought to be an acceptable practice since these particular objects promoted a higher appreciation of art as well as a

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32 Hornaday, Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting, 159.
better understanding of natural history and scientific observation. If sportsmen “really must kill all the large mammalia from off the face of the earth,” the taxidermist wrote, neglecting to mention the hundreds of mammals that had died due to his own desire to procure trophies, “do at least preserve the heads that are brought low by your skill and prowess.”

Though regrettable, then, hunting endangered animals could be justified by appealing to the power of taxidermy to transform dead animal bodies into works of art and scientific specimens. This kind of rhetoric, one that lamented the disappearance of wild animals while suggesting ways taxidermy could ease the negative consequences of such extinction, obscured hunters’, naturalists’ and taxidermists’ participation in the patriarchal processes of imperialism by reframing their violent assault against nature as a benevolent act of protection and guardianship.

As Hornaday’s rhetoric suggests, sportsmen and taxidermists were careful to emphasize that the pursuit and accumulation of hunting trophies was a productive activity located outside the conventional boundaries of the capitalist market, and they objected to the explicit commodification of wildlife through practices such as market hunting or pot hunting. Naturalists characterized these objects as emblems of animalistic authenticity and argued that the market ought not determine the value of wild animal bodies. The true worth of hunting trophies stemmed from one’s ability to vanquish dangerous prey in the wilderness. In the eyes of elite hunters, then, the commodification of wildlife threatened the status of wilderness as a site untainted by urban-industrial modernity. Naturalists objected to the buying and selling of trophies as cowardly and unsportsmanlike, and they criticized the marketing of wildlife for food, arguing that in a civilized and

33 Ibid., 158.
technologically progressive nation such as Canada, such practices were needless wastages of wild animals’ lives.  

Alongside such rhetoric, however, sportsmen and taxidermists ignored the ways in which their own practices of trophy collecting were invariably located within the expanding web of consumer capitalism. Big game hunting was part of a broader global tourist economy, elite hunters themselves openly supportive of the transnational circulation of sportsmen and specimens as a means of promoting Canadian hotels, outfitting companies, and transportation industries.  

They participated in an international system of exchange in taxidermic materials, fusing mass-produced objects such as glass eyes, fake fur, and plaster, with the preserved skins and body parts of once living animals, producing material trophies that were a kind of hybrid amalgamation of synthetic and animal substances. Finally, sportsmen’s perception of trophies as objects that bestowed cultural capital upon their owners echoed the logic of commodity capitalism. As Jay Mechling has pointed out, photographs of hunters posed with their collections illustrate the relationship between consumer culture and trophy accumulation, visualizing not just human might but materialistic plentitude. Yet sportsmen’s construction of hunting trophies as authentic, representational tokens of vanishing wildlife prevented them from accepting the very real penetration of capitalism into their taxidermic practices.

35 For instance, see Commission of Conservation, eds. National Conference on Conservation of Game, Fur-Bearing Animals and Other Wild Life (Ottawa: J. de LaBroquerie Taché, 1919); Anonymous, untitled article, Rod & Gun in Canada Volume III no. 4 (September 1901), 10.
Taxidermy and the Natural History Museum: Empire, Preservation, Temporality

Major changes in the character and function of natural history museums in North America and Europe occurred alongside the professionalization of taxidermy in the late decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. In the 1880s, many taxidermists scathingly criticized local museums for remaining old fashioned and oblivious to recent innovations in taxidermic practice and in natural history more generally. The typical English museum, for instance, according to Montagu Browne, was “a sorry and servile imitator of the worst points of our national museum,” with its “dry-as-dust collections,” “atrociously rendered animals,” and “a sprinkling of funereal and highly-disreputable birds, some extremely-protracted fishes, some chipped insects, and a lot of shells.”

By 1900, however, many of these museums had achieved greater scientific sophistication, both in terms of the artistry of taxidermy and in the breadth of collections.

The evolution of natural history museums was directly linked to the expansion of empires and the consolidation of nations, enabling metropolitan rulers to display imperial riches and to demonstrate their ability to dominate colonized beings, both human and animal. Naturalists’ efforts to preserved taxidermied birds and animals within museum spaces was also a preservationist gesture intended to halt the damaging effects of time and human civilization upon animal populations. Finally, museological displays of taxidermy were indicative of the ways in which contemporary observers perceived the boundary between human and animal at a time when Darwinian theories of evolution were gaining popular acceptance. The changing methods of exhibiting preserved animals

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in museum spaces, then, indicated a host of Victorian cultural anxieties regarding the consequences of modernity upon human and animal life.

Acknowledging the interdependence of big game hunting, imperialism, and museum display, many taxidermists provided instructions in their manuals on how best to preserve specimens in the field, from the darkest corners of Africa to the snowy forests of Canada. As Montagu Browne explained, describing the need for imperialist big game hunters to catalogue carefully their specimens and ensure proper preservation when sending the specimens to the metropole, “[t]he plan of taking the skin entirely off the head will be found of the utmost advantage to explorers or collectors in foreign countries, as the skulls may be numbered and a corresponding number scratched on a tin, or written on a parchment label…The usual way of sending horned heads home from abroad is to leave the skins attached to the skull.” 38 Other taxidermists advised collectors and naturalists to appeal to local indigenous populations for assistance in gathering specimens, pointing out that these natives’ knowledge of local environments and animals was of great help preserving potentially dangerous creatures. 39

English taxidermists in particular wrote at length on the imperative of collecting specimens from all corners of the globe, fusing their imperial project with the art of taxidermy and the intellectual requirements of natural history. “In past years the Museum collections have been greatly augmented and enriched by the donation of valuable series of specimens obtained by travelers and others whose vocations have necessitated their residence abroad in all parts of the world,” wrote one English taxidermist, Ray Lankester,

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38 Browne, *Practical Taxidermy*, no page.
linking the study of natural history with the expansion of empire. “It often happens that military and naval officers, explorers, missionaries, and others have leisure time which they would be willing to devote to collecting natural history objects if they had a better knowledge of the manner in which such things should be collected and preserved.”

Lankester provided a lengthy list of specimens the museum required in order to establish a more complete collection, indicating the ways in which naturalists’ effort to collect, classify, and know the plants and animals from all parts of the world was linked to a broader sense of imperial superiority and national might.

As imperial institutions, then, turn-of-the-century natural history museums functioned as spaces in which metropolitan leaders displayed the spoils of empire. Such sites exhibited specimens collected from all corners of the globe, catalogued the world’s flora and fauna in a gesture of intellectual as well as physical mastery, and educated the public on national greatness and imperial might as well as on the laws of nature. In her analysis of colonial natural history museums within the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Susan Sheets-Pyenson argues that although Canadian institutions were, of course, much smaller than were natural history museums in the British metropole, both imperial and colonial officials desired “to recreate Victorian palaces of science in the colonies.” Museum officials in Canada hoped to instruct men and women about the plants and animals native to their local environments as well as about the specimens located across the British Empire more generally. While seeking to foster appreciation for the outdoors, these naturalists also desired to teach

42 Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science*, 11.
lessons regarding order, hierarchy, and classification, pointing out the ways in which each individual specimen fit into a taxonomic whole.\footnote{For contemporary discussions of the arrangement of specimens see J.F. Whiteaves, “Report of the Natural History Society,” \textit{The Canadian Naturalist} 1 no. 4 (1864): 308-309; “Curator’s Report,” \textit{The Canadian Record of Science} 4 no. 3 (July 1890): 192; “Report of the Council,” \textit{The Canadian Record of Science} 3 no. 7 (July 1889): 446, which discusses efforts to provide new, clear labels for specimens “so that each tells its own short history in a few words.” John M. MacKenzie has also discussed the shift in museum practice from using older, Aristotelian forms of classification, toward embracing the theories of Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin, in both metropolitan and colonial museums. See John M. MacKenzie, \textit{Museums and Empire: Natural History, Human Cultures and Colonial Identities} (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009).}

Collections held within nineteenth century natural history museums in Canada were considerably less extensive than were their metropolitan counterparts. The collection of the Peter Redpath Museum, associated with McGill University in Montreal, for instance, was initially comprised of the personal specimens of its curator, John William Dawson, who taught geology and paleontology at McGill. By 1862 the collection consisted of ten thousand mineralogical, zoological, botanical, and ethnological specimens, mostly acquired through private donations.\footnote{William J. Dawson, “Notice of the Natural History Collection of McGill University,” \textit{Canadian Naturalist and Geologist} 7 (1862): 221-222.} The Redpath Museum was typical of the larger natural history museums in Canada; underfunded, reliant on private gifts, staffed by volunteers and graduate students, these kinds of institutions struggled for many years to win the support of both government and lay observers. The number of specimens and the depth of collections grew over the years, but museum officials were unable to accommodate these donated items within the limited spaces of the institution. Curators and members of local natural history societies frequently bemoaned the disrepair of their buildings, emphasizing the dilapidated state of display cases and specimens and regretting their inability to remedy the deplorable...
situation. Even the National Museum, the dominion’s first natural history institution, suffered from lack of space and resources. The National Museum belonged to the Geological Survey of Canada and was thus funded by the government. Originally located in Montreal, the museum moved to Ottawa in 1881, a reflection of post-Confederation efforts to create institutions capable of fostering national sentiment amongst the populace, in this case by showcasing the plants, animals, minerals and other forms of wealth contained within the newly formed nation. Although better funded and staffed than smaller museums, members of the National Museum complained that the institution lacked sufficient resources.

A major obstacle facing colonial museums, then, was capturing public and private interest and obtaining necessary funds to establish sufficient collections, and many smaller, more provincial institutions in the Atlantic Provinces, the new western territories, and Quebec faced similar limitations in regards to funding, space, and public interest. These smaller museums typically contained around five thousand specimens, ranging from fossils and minerals, to preserved plants, taxidermied birds, and mammals, and were typically reliant upon personal collections and private patronage, which oftentimes shaped a particular institution’s collection in unanticipated and undesirable

45 Contemporary commentary on lack of support for museums evident in “Report,” Canadian Record of Science 5 no. 7 (1893): 415; “Report of the Council” Canadian Record of Science 3 no. 7 (July 1889): 445; Sheets-Pyenson, Cathedrals of Science, 41-55.

ways. “While the great majority of American museums prospered from infancy,” historian Archie Key has written, “Canadian museums faced close to one hundred and fifty years of frustrations, poverty, and governmental apathy while dedicated individuals and idealistic societies sought to serve as guardians of Canada’s heritage.” Although Canadian natural scientists tried to highlight the potential significance of museums in educating the public on the vast natural resource wealth contained within the dominion, governments at the time did not perceive institutional funding as part of their mandate, and museum development, for the most part, remained a largely private affair, sponsored by wealthy families such as the Redpaths and the Molsons.

But despite these many limitations, Canadian natural history museums retained grandiose ambitions and aspired to imperial greatness. The building of the Redpath Museum, for instance, was itself a relic of British imperialism, its neoclassical façade an imitation of museum buildings in the metropole. The main floor of the museum contained

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47 Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science*, 17.
49 Sir Henry A. Miers and S.F. Markham, *A Report on the Museums of Canada* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable Ltd., 1932). In 1931 two men from Britain arrived to Canada with the task of inspecting the state of the dominion’s provincial natural history museums. Sir Henry Miers and S.F. Markham, prominent officials of the British Museum, had been commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation to survey and report on the condition of Canada’s museums, and they published their findings in a 1932 book entitled *A Report on the Museums of Canada*, which emphasized the relatively underfinanced, overcrowded, disorganized and undeveloped nature of the colony’s natural history institutions. The authors lamented the ways in which Canadian museums lagged behind those of Great Britain and the United States, with a few notable exceptions such as the National History Museum in Ottawa and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. “In equipment and display methods,” the authors moaned, “the smaller Canadian museums seem to be years behind the times. Dust-proof cases were entirely absent save in the half a dozen leading museums…In several instances this has led to moths destroying some priceless Indian textile and leather fabrics, and it would appear that preventable losses through this cause have resulted in a great impoverishment of Canadian collections.” Miers and Markham also noted that many of these collections had been created by individuals or local societies, whose collections had been augmented by unsolicited donations of “isolated souvenirs and curios” that altered the original purpose of the exhibitions, complaining that “many of these museums of a general character have become deplorably congested and encumbered with duplicates and miscellaneous objects, which, by their number and inappropriateness, only confuse the visitor.” If this was the state of smaller Canadian museums in 1931, after public and private interest in such institutions had increased considerably, one can only imagine the disorganized, deteriorating character of museum specimens and buildings. See Miers and Markham, *A Report on the Museums of Canada*, 11, 15.
a large lecture theatre, a herbarium, a reference library, a boardroom, and offices and classrooms, while a staircase adorned with archeological specimens led to the Great Museum Hall. The second floor housed zoological specimens, including a variety of birds and mammals that were stuffed, mounted, and enclosed within glass cases in proper taxonomic order from the simplest organisms to the most complex animals. Museum curator William J. Dawson’s extensive correspondence with Ward’s taxidermy firm in New York, his many contacts with English naturalists, as well as his son’s association with foreign scientists cultivated through work for the Geological Survey of Canada, highlights the transnational, imperial character of natural history in the late nineteenth century.50 Dawson’s writings further reiterated his belief that the study of nature fostered imperial ties between the Canadian colony and the British metropole. As he noted, the study of the natural world allowed Canadians to strengthen “the links of connection between ourselves and kindred institutions in other parts of the great empire to which it is our happiness to belong,” and suggested that scientific learning through natural history museums allowed the British metropole to retain its “political, social, and scientific power” within the Canadian colony.51

Museums such as the Peter Redpath Museum, then, embodied imperialist yearnings in their effort to accumulate specimens from all corners of the globe. In a report from 1890, for instance, the Montreal Natural History Society noted the various specimens recently acquired, which constituted a global assemblage of plants, animals, minerals, and other objects: a collection of birds, a taxidermied ant-eating bear, quartz, Norway pine, Chinese testament, olive-sided fly-catcher, head of maskinonge, great blue

50 Sheets-Pyenson, Cathedrals of Science, 57, 84-5; Dawson, “Notice,” 221-222.
51 William J. Dawson, “President’s Address,” The Canadian Naturalist 2 no. 4 (1865): 303.
heron, evening grosbeak, brown rat, alligator, peregrine falcon, and an Indian war club excavated from near Guelph.\textsuperscript{52} The following years saw further accumulations from remote, foreign lands; for instance, the Museum’s annual reports recorded the acquisition of war implements and other objects from Samoa, tortoise shells from the East Indies as well as pipes, bows, snakeskin and shells, a collection of “Egyptian curiosities,” live reptiles from the Zoological Gardens in London (which unfortunately failed to survive the Canadian winter and were subsequently stuffed and exhibited in the museum), as well as a variety of minerals, plants, animals, and fossils more generally.\textsuperscript{53} Canadian natural history museums also collected artifacts from indigenous peoples residing within the dominion, in an imperial gesture that reiterated colonialist conflations of indigeneity and animality.\textsuperscript{54}

The organization of objects and knowledge within the spaces of museums thus spoke to the power of dead animal bodies to constitute distinctive visions of Canada. In “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936,” Donna Haraway reflects that “[b]ehind every mounted animal, bronze sculpture, or photograph lies a profusion of objects and social interactions among people and other animals.”\textsuperscript{55} Haraway argues that the trophy photographs and taxidermied specimens of African animals arranged in the Akeley African Hall at the American Museum of Natural History narrated tales of patriarchy and empire, pointing to the irony of taxidermy as a

\textsuperscript{52}“Curator’s Report, 1889-1890,” \textit{The Canadian Record of Science} 4 no. 3 (July 1890): 193-194.
\textsuperscript{53}“Report of the Council” \textit{The Canadian Record of Science} 3 no. 7 (July 1889): 445; “Proceedings of the Natural History Society” \textit{Canadian Record of Science} 7 no. 4 (October 1896): 259; “Museum Report for 1896-1897” \textit{Canadian Record of Science} 7 no. 6 (April 1897): 320.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Canadian Record of Science} 4 no. 7 (July 1891): 383. Pauline Wakeham has also discussed the ways in which taxidermied natural history specimens conflated notions of indigeneity and animality and thus reiterated processes of colonialism in Canada. See Pauline Wakeham, \textit{Second Skins: Semiotic Readings in Taxidermic Reconstruction}, doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Alberta, 2005.
profoundly labourious, ideological practice that yet presents an image of nature as though spontaneously discovered, unmarred by human presence or ideology. Canadian naturalists also used taxidermied specimens in ways that pointed to concerns over nation and empire, revealing their desires to articulate a place for the dominion within the world more broadly. A settler society proud of its status as a colony within the British Empire, Canada also desired to cultivate its own empire, exploring, mapping, cataloguing, and displaying the various specimens of flora and fauna contained within its transcontinental borders as an assertion of the nation’s colonial power. And as Haraway’s observations suggest, taxidermists’ rhetoric of natural history and science obscured the physical and rhetorical labour involved in producing Canada’s colonial landscape as ‘natural.’

As a means of articulating a sense of national and imperial identity, and as a way of understanding Canada’s place within the world, contemporary naturalists devised two distinctive yet overlapping approaches toward building museums, illustrated in the development of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto and in the growth of the Royal Provincial Museum of British Columbia in Victoria. These two approaches reflected a combination of the idiosyncrasies of curatorial preferences, the specific conditions of local processes of colonialism, and the nature of regional landscapes and animal populations. The ROM evolved from the various collections held within University of Toronto colleges toward the end of the nineteenth century as natural scientists, educators, and other social observers began to campaign for a world-class museum to showcase Canadian intellectual sophistication and to display the wealth and resources of the dominion on a global stage. As Lynne J. Teather has pointed out in The Royal Ontario Museum: A Prehistory, 1830-1914, early debates over the desired

56 Ibid., 34-36.
character of the institution indicate Victorian Canadians’ visions of what kind of identity the newly-formed transcontinental dominion would have. Although the ROM did showcase some native natural history and mineralogical specimens, the museum’s imperialist vision was particularly global in nature, and its creators opted to specialize in the collection and exhibition of artifacts from foreign civilizations, displaying objects from Egypt, China, and other remote locations instead of featuring native specimens.⁵⁷ John M. MacKenzie has similarly argued that the ROM compensated for the perceived lack of distinctly Canadian antiquities by accumulating items from abroad, writing that “the ROM created a great ‘contact zone’ of world cultures” in its effort “to offer an extraordinary insight into the possibilities of scientific globalization.”⁵⁸

While the Royal Ontario Museum eschewed local natural history in its effort to display relics from all corners of the earth, the Royal Provincial Museum of British Columbia opted to showcase objects collected locally, highlighting taxidermied animals indigenous to Canada and the material culture of First Nations peoples. The BC Museum was established for two specific reasons: to house the extensive collections of natural history specimens already possessed by private individuals and societies and to stake a claim in the frantic scramble for British Columbian First Nations’ artifacts then being waged by major museum institutions across the United States and Europe. As stated by the naturalists, collectors, and amateur scientists who submitted a petition to the Lieutenant Governor in 1886, pleading for assistance in establishing a provincial museum of natural history, “[i]t is a source of general regret that objects connected with the ethnology of the country are being yearly taken away in great numbers to the enrichment

of other museums and private collections.” The petition also noted the many natural history specimens in need of exhibitionary space, drawing explicit connections between museological display and the potential wealth to be gained from exploiting such resources. The Museum’s first curator, John Fannin, was an avid hunter, taxidermist, and contributor to sporting periodicals such as Rod & Gun in Canada, and worked as a guide in his spare time; owing to such interests, the institution became home for Fannin’s vast personal collection of taxidermied creatures. The BC Museum had a distinctively frontier character, then, and made little effort to acquire specimens from beyond its hinterland. As opposed to the curatorial members and founders of the ROM, who were wealthy men and women with strong cultural and economic ties to England, the BC Museum was created and maintained by amateurs well into the twentieth century who boasted of the ruggedness and remoteness of their local environment.

These two distinctive approaches to museum building—one oriented toward the vast empires of Europe and tracing its origins to classical antiquity, the other internally focused and seeking to display indigenous artifacts to local audiences—were colonial responses to the task of nation-building that highlighted competing visions of Canada’s place in the world in the late nineteenth century. Whereas the ROM embodied a global imperialist vision and sought to present Toronto, and Canada more broadly, as a sophisticated, progressive partner within the British Empire, the Royal British Columbia Museum represented a more domestic form of colonialism in its signification of human mastery over animal and settler conquest over First Nations. The ROM’s vision, to which Teather refers as “national imperialism” aspired to international acclaim as a center of

60 Corley-Smith, White Bears and Other Curiosities, 21-24.
scientific innovation and imperial grandeur, while the BC Museum’s ideal, “imperial nationalism,” pictured the dominion as significant in its own right as a self-governing nation within a British imperial context.\(^{61}\) Although distinctive from one another, these two visions indicated Canada’s self-perception as a rapidly progressing entity poised to establish itself in an international context. Having explored, mapped, studied, and inventoried the various plants, animals, and minerals contained within its borders, Canadian observers were anxious to claim ownership over such resources and to exploit these potential sources of wealth. While contemporary commentators might disagree over the ideal appropriate balance between nationalism and imperialism, all agreed that the pursuit of natural history and the collection and exhibition of specimens were the means toward realizing a great future.

In addition to promoting imperialist visions, then, Canadian natural history museums were also distinctly nationalistic. Archie Key has argued that because of the relatively unsophisticated nature of many collections, Canadian museums failed to nurture a nascent Canadian identity through natural history.\(^{62}\) But Key’s argument ignores the ways in which many of the dominion’s museums positioned specimens of its natural wealth such as taxidermied animals as evidence of the colony’s ability to conquer wild spaces and creatures and boasted of the nation’s scientific exploits. As the Montreal Natural History Society observed, “[t]his society should be as it were an index of our country’s ever increasing prosperity. In its museum should be seen the results of the geological enterprise of Canadian scientists, and some tokens at least of the untold treasures of the Canadian soil; while its well-selected and well-stocked library should

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\(^{62}\) Key, *Beyond Four Walls*, 98.
prove to the world that Canada’s mineral wealth is equaled if not surpassed by her mental worth and work.”\textsuperscript{63} Scientific prowess, then, had become an index of national worth, a measure of the physical ability to conquer nature and produce wealth and an indication of the intellectual capacity to acquire and classify such resources. As Suzanne Zeller has noted in \textit{Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation}, Victorian observers hailed the ability of natural science to annihilate space and time and associated the study of plants and animals with physical processes of territorial acquisition and exploitation, positioning such accomplishments as a source of national pride.\textsuperscript{64}

Naturalists thus used museum displays to signify a sense of national greatness, and Canadian boosters similarly used taxidermic specimens to boast of the dominion’s wealth and promise at international exhibitions. For a nation such as Canada, perceived globally as a relatively uninhabited, wild and snowy colony of Great Britain, taxidermy displays at exhibitions and world’s fairs enabled the dominion to insert itself into broader imperial narratives of discovery and conquest. Such occasions also enabled Canada to encourage elite British big game hunters to try their hand at mastering its moose, elk, and bear, promoting the dominion as a site of excitement and vigour. In describing the Canadian display at the South Kensington Museum in the 1880s, for instance, parliamentarians elaborated on the importance of taxidermied specimens in advertising the abundance of game in Canada as well as Canadian expertise in the craft of preserving

\textsuperscript{63} “Report,” \textit{Canadian Naturalist and Quarterly Journal of Science} 9 no. 6 (August 1880): 378.

these creatures. The Canadian pavilion at the St. Louis world’s fair was similarly adorned with a variety of taxidermied mammals, displayed in museum cases as testament of national scientific prowess and exhibited on mounts in the style of hunting trophies as evidence of human mastery over wild animal.

Of course not all taxidermied specimens in turn-of-the-century Canada were exhibited in international, national, or provincial museums. In contrast to these larger institutions, with neoclassical architecture and academic curators, many natural history museums were much smaller, local affairs, the headquarters of a local natural history society or field naturalists’ club. Little evidence exists that documents the activities of these rural museums, though a few photograph survive that indicate the ways in which taxidermied animals were displayed. Consider, for instance, images depicting one such museum, called “Doctor George’s Natural History Museum” in Red Deer Alberta, taken in the early years of the twentieth century. The photographs of this museum illustrate a wooden-planked room, the walls crowded with mounted mammal heads and shelves full of smaller quadrupeds and bird specimens. These particular animals—moose, grouse, elk, for instance—would have been locally killed and mounted, perhaps by Dr. George himself. Although it is difficult to speculate on the context of viewing that occurred in these rural museums given the fragmentary nature of existing historical evidence, the lack

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65 As described in the Sessional Papers Volume 10, first session of the 6th parliament (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger, & Co., 1887): 29, “It is to Mr. J.H. Hubbard, of Winnipeg, that the Dominion is indebted for the most comprehensive exposition of her riches of the chase...Mr. Hubbard’s game trophy was the chief attraction in the whole Exhibition to the classes of wealth and leisure, and was the means of sending to the Dominion many parties of distinguished sportsmen. Like the agricultural trophy, it was pyramidal in form. The numerous specimens, exhausting the catalogue of birds and beasts of the chase, were prepared with the utmost taste and skill, and were so placed by Mr. Hubbard himself as to display them to conspicuous advantage. The collection was constantly visited by persons of royal or aristocratic rank, and it would have been impossible to contrive any more effectual means of guiding the powerful sporting element of England in the direction of Canada.”

66 Photograph of the Canadian Pavilion at the St. Louis Exhibition from Rod & Gun in Canada 6 no. 7 (December 1904): 358.
of explanatory labeling is evident in these images. The specimens in Dr. George’s museums are decontextualized from their natural environments but have not been recontextualized as scientific specimens representative of the various orders of species. This suggests that these smaller museums were less concerned with arranging birds and mammals in accordance with proper scientific taxonomic frameworks, allowing viewers to draw upon their personal knowledge of animals when gazing at the stuffed creatures. The vicious posturing of taxidermied wolves, for instance, may have conjured popular cultural characterizations of wolves as villainous creatures more so than museological constructions of the animals as scientific specimens.67

Taxidermied birds and mammals thus formed an essential component of natural history collections in turn-of-the-century Canadian museums, whether large or small, and the majority of larger institutions contained reasonably comprehensive displays of preserved animals.68 Interior photographs of the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for instance, illustrate the wide variety of specimens exhibited as well as curators’ and taxidermists’ techniques of display. Most of the larger mammals such as moose, elk, and deer are not arranged into elaborate dioramas but are instead exhibited as isolated specimens, decontextualized from their natural habitats, recontextualized within the glass cases of the museum. The

67 For further discussion on contemporary popular characterizations of wolves, See Jon T. Colman, Vicious: Wolves and Men in America (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004); in Canada see Tina Loo, States of Nature: Conserving Canada’s Wildlife in the Twentieth Century (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); George Colpitts, Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).
68 Sir Henry A. Miers and S.F. Markham, Directory of Museums and Art Galleries in Canada, Newfoundland, Bermuda, The British West Indies, British Guiana, and the Falkland Islands (London: The Museums Association, 1933). This report listed each existing colonial natural history establishment, when it was founded, where it was located, the scope and nature of its collection, publications, and other information such as museum hours and fees. The authors’ discussion of several dozen museums in Canada indicates that, at least by the early decades of the twentieth century, many local museums contained a large number of taxidermied birds and mammals, mostly from Canadian regions.
scientific and artistic attention to detail is notable, and the animals appear considerably lifelike. Still, the location of these stuffed creatures within institutional spaces utterly divorced from nature reminds viewers that they are looking at specimens and not at animals, at signifiers of entire species rather than at individual beings.\textsuperscript{69} The animals’ continuous availability to the penetrating gaze of viewers, moreover, renders their marginality particularly acute. A few of the smaller taxidermied mammals are arranged into more elaborate dioramas, complete with artificial plants and painted backgrounds. One such display depicts two foxes prowling around some brush in the snow, evidently hunting. Another diorama depicts four raccoons climbing up artificial tree branches; the posturing of the taxidermied animals intricate and lifelike, illustrating that, though Canadian museums may have suffered a lack of funding and interest, taxidermists and curators did strive to follow broader, international trends in museum display.\textsuperscript{70}

A few notable images of the British Columbia Natural History Museum depict the interior of the institution’s taxidermy workshop. A photograph entitled \textit{Victoria, Provincial Museum Interior, Taxidermy Shop} depicts the taxidermist at work in his shop. The shop itself is relatively large, illuminated by a few sunny windows, and the taxidermist sits in the middle of the frame, surrounded by his specimens. An assortment of taxidermied animals in various stages of disassembly and recreation adorn the shop,


with an elk head hanging behind the taxidermist, a cougar mounted in front of him, smaller birds and mammals perched on a table beside him, and a large elk standing beside the man. Most of these animals have yet to achieve semblance of lifelikeness. A series of photographs illustrates the taxidermic process of stuffing and mounting a moose, the first image depicting the manikin of the animal, constructed of bones, wooden boards, and metal rods. Subsequent images illustrate the ways in which the moose’s body was built up with clay and plaster cast before the fur was then reattached to the body and sewn up. The seemingly disorganized, jumbled array of specimens in their various stages of completion within the private workshop of the taxidermist contrasts with the public, exterior galleries of the museum in which taxidermied specimens were positioned much more rationally, according to the dictates of taxonomic science, heads and antlers mounted on the walls with careful symmetry and precision.\(^{71}\)

Taxidermy displays, then, indicated naturalists’ efforts to impose order on the seeming chaos of nature, and they exercised such control in ways that perpetuated exclusionary categories of difference in the guise of science.\(^ {72}\) The most obvious hierarchy perpetuated by these specimens was that between human and animal; as Carl Berger has written of nineteenth century Canadian naturalists, they believed that “[a]ll men, from the rudest ‘savages’ to the ‘civilized’ Victorians, possessed distinctive attributes that decisively separated them from animals—notably the intelligence and the capacity for advancing from their past states, or relapsing into them, under the most

\(^{71}\) Albert Hatherly Maynard, *Victoria, Provincial Museum Interior Taxidermy Shop, Moose in Progress, 190*, Royal Archives of British Columbia, G-03178, G-03180, G-03181, G-03183.

diverse conditions imaginable.” Even those naturalists such as Ernest Thompson Seton, who embraced Darwinian theories of evolution and thus promoted notions of human-animal kinship, displayed their dominance over animals by killing and mounting them. Moreover, given the elitist, imperial, and patriarchal dimensions of killing animals, taxidermy displays perpetuated exclusions based on class, race, and gender as well. The exhibition of First Nations’ artifacts alongside taxidermied animals, for instance, reiterated the association of indigenous men and women with wild animals and with the trope of extinction in which Aboriginal peoples were popularly perceived as doomed to extinction, as discussed at greater length in chapter two. Yet naturalists’ and taxidermists’ efforts to advertise the allegedly scientific nature of their work suggested that the rhetoric embodied within natural history museums was objective and value-free, thus normalizing processes of exclusion and naturalizing inequalities between human and animal and between various groups of humans.

Observing taxidermied specimens within the space of a museum encouraged a different kind of viewing than did gazing at hunting trophies hanging upon the wall of a sportsman’s private home. Susan Pearce has argued that the process of selection that occurs when translating a hunting trophy into a museum specimen indicates the ways in which objects on display in museum settings are “as much social constructs as spears or typewriters, and as susceptible to social analysis.” As opposed to the hunting trophy, which is intended to authenticate one particular sportsman’s mastery of one particular animal, the museum specimen symbolizes the species as a whole, the individuality of the animal subsumed within the scientific rhetoric of taxonomic representativeness. Pearce

74 Pearce, Museums, Objects, and Collections, 6.
defines the kind of collecting carried out by natural history museums as systematic, as opposed to souvenir or fetishistic collecting, as a practice that seeks to compare and contrast items in order to locate particular specimens within a broader rationalized framework. Museum specimens are allegedly selected based on their typicality or atypicality as referents to the natural world. “Collected specimens have become artifacts in that the act of selection turns them into man-made products,” Pearce suggests, “and once they have entered our world they become part of the relationships which we construct for them and which, like all our social constructs, we are more prone to admire than criticize.”

Pearce concludes her analysis of museum spaces and practices of collecting by pointing out how material objects do not simply reflect their collectors’ ideological perspectives but actively shape historical processes and authenticate present concerns in ways that most often suppress change and thus maintain a more traditional status quo. These observations highlight the deeply conservative nature of museum collecting. Material traces of the past have been preserved in institutional settings historically as a reactionary gesture in defiance of social, cultural, and political change, thus amounting to an exclusionary desire to maintain the status quo. Just as sportsmen attempted to position hunting as a means of retaining imperial and patriarchal privilege, so too did collectors and naturalists working within museum spaces seek to retain control over a rapidly modernizing world, one in which they feared losing their sense of power.

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75 Ibid., 87.
76 Ibid., 209.
77 One major example of naturalists’ effort to resist change is the refusal of William J. Dawson, curator of the Peter Redpath Museum and professor of geology at McGill University, to accept the theories of Charles Darwin despite widespread accommodation to the British naturalist’s notions of evolution by natural selection. Dawson wrote extensively against Darwin’s theories and published tracts that circulated the transatlantic world protesting evolutionary theory, though he was, of course, fighting a losing battle. See
Similar to the ways in which hunters’ narratives and photographs expressed a sense of guilt over the disappearance of animals from the Canadian wilderness, then, so too did taxidermy embody a reactionary effort to preserve traces of animals perceived to be vanishing rapidly from existence. As William Temple Hornaday lamented in the preface to *Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting*, “[t]he rapid and alarming destruction of all forms of wild animal life which is now going on furiously throughout the entire world, renders it imperatively necessary for those who would build up great zoological collections to be up and doing before any more of the leading species are exterminated.”78 Hornaday continued, emphasizing the urgency of the collectors’ task given the rapid pace of extinction. The taxidermist argued that “now is the time collect,” warning his colleagues that unscrupulous hunters were killing animals faster than they could reproduce, suggesting that “the time will come when the majority of the vertebrate species now inhabiting the earth in a wild state will be either totally exterminated, or exist only under protection.”79

As such rhetoric suggested, one of the stated goals of taxidermy was to arrest the passage of time and to preserve declining animal populations in material, representational form. Or in the words of sportsman and taxidermist Thomas Brown, taxidermists’ aim was “to discover the best method of averting the progress of Time’s destroying hand.”80

Naturalists positioned taxidermy as a noble practice capable of protecting animals from

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the destructive force of urban-industrial modernity, and taxidermists repeatedly lamented the impact of human civilization on animal populations. As Frederic Lucas noted in a report of the Society of American Taxidermists, “[m]an is a great destroyer, and our wild animals and especially the larger ones, are being rapidly civilized from the face of the earth. Here, then, is the great field for the taxidermist to place before the public animals from all climes and all countries as they appear in their native haunts.”

Jean Baudrillard has argued that material objects allow their possessors to maintain control over the passage of time—or, at least, an illusory perception of control—and, as such, the act of collecting constitutes a regressive gesture at mastery and domination. “Not only do objects help us master the world, by virtue of their being inserted into practical sets,” the theorist writes, “they also help us, by virtue of their being inserted into mental sets, to establish dominion over time, interrupting its continuous flow and classifying its parts in the same way that we classify habits, and insisting that it submit to the same constraints of association that inform the way we set things out in space.”

Similar to the ways in which naturalists positioned photographs as a means of preserving animals amidst escalating processes of extinction, so too did taxidermists construct their craft as a technique of preservation, as a way to ensure the survival of threatened beings into the future. Taxidermy was thus perceived as a technique capable of mastering the physical bodies of animals, and it was also praised as a means of controlling time itself. The practice of rendering animals immortal through disassembly and resurrection reflected contemporary fears of animal extinction, but it also revealed deeper fears of social and cultural change. Naturalists, typically of British or American

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background, middle to upper class, also feared that, as an exclusive group, they too were a dying breed. Just as the act of collecting hunting trophies constituted a gesture at securing the survival of one’s personal identity through one’s collection of objects, the taxidermic resurrection of vanishing animals within the spaces of natural history museums represented a collective effort to conserve an earlier era in which the power of these men had been more secure.

As imperial institutions that sought to collect and exhibit specimens from all corners of the world, and as nostalgic establishments that aspired to halt the destructive passage of time through the resurrection of taxidermied animals, turn-of-the-century natural history museums parallel Michel Foucault’s definition of heterotopias, sites that represent a variety of diverse spaces within one particular locality. For instance, the imperialist aspiration of natural history museums to collect and exhibit animal specimens from all corners of the globe was a means of representing many different places of the world within one confined space, enabling viewers to experience distinctive locations simultaneously. As one contemporary taxidermist exclaimed, “[t]he museums and cabinets are brought together natural objects of all kinds, from the most extreme points of the globe; and presented in a form that enables us, as it were, to look upon the mighty field of nature at one view.” In this way, the author continued, one could encounter animals otherwise only available in the pages of fiction or travel literature.

Foucault discussed a variety of heterotopias, but one in particular describes the natural history museum succinctly. Termed chronotopias by subsequent scholars, this particular heterotopia is characterized by an impulse to collect, to produce an exhaustive archive of things and knowledge. As Foucault defined the concept, the chronotopia

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described “[t]he will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages,” suggesting that the museum and the library stood as emblematic of such spaces in nineteenth century western culture.\footnote{Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces—Heterotopias,” translated by Jay Miskowiec, available online: http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html. See also Michel Foucault, “Des Espaces Autres,” Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité (October 1984); Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” Diacritics (1986): 22-27.} Taxidermists perceived the passage of time as one of the most pressing problems of existence, and their belief that urban-industrial capitalism was destroying the nation’s wild animals and threatening the dominion’s social order encouraged them to characterize taxidermied animals as objects capable of achieving immortality and thus of defeating time itself. As both heterotopias and chronotopias, then, natural history museums embodied conservative efforts to master both space and time.

**Ornamental Taxidermy: Gender, Consumption, and the Domestication of Wildlife**

Similar to taxidermied hunting trophies and museum specimens, the preservation of animal parts for ornamental purposes gained increasing popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ornamental taxidermy referred to the practice of displaying stuffed birds and animals as a means of decorating one’s home, and many taxidermy manuals contained a chapter or two dedicated exclusively to this branch of the craft. As William Temple Hornaday observed, ornamental taxidermy had become a fashionable trend: “decorative pieces are produced in bewildering variety, and many of them are justly regarded as works of art.”\footnote{Hornaday, Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting, 220.} Such items were displayed in galleries and exhibitions as well as in private homes, and their relatively widespread availability suggests that many Canadian men and women who were not themselves game hunters used the
preserved bodies of animals as ornamental decorations. Home decoration manuals from the late nineteenth century, for instance, advised women to seek out a fine pair of deer antlers or a preserved head to adorn the walls of parlours and halls, alongside cuckoo clocks, tropical plants, Roman scarves, and Japanese fans, and other worldly items. The Eaton’s catalogue offered taxidermied items such as fur rugs for baby carriages that came complete with preserved animal heads, while retail stores, fur parlours, and other mail service catalogues such as Rowland Ward’s, which specialized in exotic taxidermied animal furniture, circulated widely throughout North America. One such catalogue, for instance, advertised a plethora of objects from Africa, including “all kinds of native curios, karosses, lion, tiger, all kinds of small skins. Game horns, ostrich feathers, rhino and hippo, giraffe whips and tails. Ivory, rhinoceros horn walking sticks and whips” and claimed to specialize in record sized trophies, able to ship anywhere in the world.

Indicative of the ways in which Victorian men and women embraced the study of natural history, the nineteenth century fashion of using preserved animal parts to adorn one’s private home reveals the means through which contemporaries domesticated the wilderness, literally transporting fragments of wildlife into the intimate spaces of the home. The craft of taxidermy was not simply domesticated through the ornamental trend,

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87 Eaton’s Catalogue (Toronto: T. Eaton’s Co., 1901). The origin and production of these objects is difficult to uncover. Many fur farms existed in Canada by the early twentieth century, which would likely have furnished the skins and heads for the items sold through establishments like Eaton’s, processed in fur factories in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal. See Committee on Fisheries, Game and Fur-Bearing Animals, Commission of Conservation, Conservation of Fish, Birds and Game: Proceedings at a Meeting of the Committee, November 1 and 2, 1915 (Toronto: The Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1916). The chain of production for animal objects from more remote parts of the world is less clear, though as Melissa Milgrom notes, establishments such as Ward’s procured animals from indigenous hunters in colonial regions and taxidermically produced ornaments that were then shipped across the globe to private homes and public establishments. See Melissa Milgrom, Still Life: Adventures in Taxidermy (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010): 60.
it was also feminized, as tracts on taxidermic techniques began to appear toward the end of the nineteenth century that were directed toward women. But although women embraced the use of taxidermied animals to decorate their clothing, particularly their hats, this did not enable them to join the male fraternity of naturalists and taxidermists. Rather, women’s taste for taxidermied accessories sparked vehement outrage from sportsmen and naturalists, who chastised women’s supposed cruelty and wanton disregard for the lives of animals. Such a response indicated the varied ways in which gender, animals, and consumerism intersected in turn-of-the-century Canada.

Decorative taxidermy adopted a variety of forms. Glass cases containing various stuffed birds or mammals were mounted on walls or placed on shelves, typically with artificial grasses and flowers. Fire screens were constructed with stuffed birds laid out in ways that emphasized their wings and plumage and decorated home fireplaces, while fur rugs with or without mounted heads adorned the floors of many Victorian homes. Authors of taxidermy manuals outlined what kinds of animals were best suited for decorative mounts; in *Practical Taxidermy and Home Decoration*, for instance, Joseph Batty pointed out that elk and deer had the most even horns and were thus best suited for furniture such as gun or clothing racks, whereas the thin, long, and light antlers of the caribou were better suited for artistic ornamentation of walls. Batty continued to explain how stools and chairs could be made from deer antlers, and how the feet and legs of all mammals could be used as chair or table legs by skinning, poisoning, and bending the leg into desired form. “Very many things about us can be utilized for ornamental purposes,” Batty wrote, “[n]ature provides an inexhaustible amount of material, and artistic taste can
devise, and skillful fingers fashion, a thousand-and-one designs." In his own manual on taxidermy, Montagu Browne similarly explained the many ways in which animals, birds, and insects could be preserved for decorative purposes in a seemingly limitless array of household and personal items. Kittens, puppies, tortoises, albatrosses, lobsters, and other birds, mammals, and crustaceans, according to Browne, could be used as paper weights, baskets, pen holders, or knife handles, amongst many other possibilities.

Another notable form of ornamental taxidermy included dead game mounts, which contained taxidermied animals that were arranged to appear dead rather than alive, in contrast to typical specimens. But although these particular mounts eschewed the appearance of vitality, realism was still essential, and the animal was to appear as though naturally dead and not artificially dead. As Hornaday described a dead game mount of birds, “[s]ee that the bird hangs like a dead bird, and not like a stuffed bird. In mounting the skin, make the body flat rather than round, and have the eyes three-quarters closed. The majority of ‘dead-game’ birds are mounted with their eyes wide open. Birds close their eyes when dying.” L.H. Smith noted that dead mounts ought to look like the creature had just been plucked out of one’s game bag when returning from the field and had been hung on one’s wall, freshly killed. Another taxidermist advised that when creating a dead game mount, one must “[m]ake sure that your specimen looks dead. In order to do this with accuracy you must hang the specimen up before skinning it and study it carefully.” Just as conventional taxidermied animals were to appear utterly alive, so too were dead mounted specimens to appear absolutely dead. In describing a

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89 Batty, *Practical Taxidermy, and Home Decoration*, 172.
90 Browne, *Practical Taxidermy*, no page.
92 Smith, *A Sportsman’s Taxidermy and a Sportsman’s Photography*, 34.
poorly executed dead bird hanging, Montagu Browne bemoaned that such mounts “must be done in an aesthetic manner. Not, however, in the manner I lately saw perpetrated by a leading London taxidermist—a game bird hanging in a prominent position, as if dead, from a nail, enclosed in an elaborate mount, the bird so beautifully sleek and smooth that, although it was hanging downwards, not a feather was out of place! All was plastered down, and gravity and nature were utterly set at defiance.”

Although different in their practical utility, ornamental objects shared similar forms and meanings as hunting trophies. Taxidermied animal trophies were positioned as material embodiments of sportsmen’s claim to imperial and patriarchal might, the display of such objects viewed as a demonstration of mastery and an authentication of lived experience. Birds and mammals stuffed and mounted for ornamental purposes also embodied an aggressive notion of power over animals and conquest over nature. Similar to the ways in which big game hunters desired to position their trophies as markers of exclusivity and gentility, emphasizing their adherence to the sportsmen’s code, ornamental displays were seen to indicate a genteel and refined notion of status, taste, and distinction. Yet, in contrast with hunting trophies, decorative objects were more signifiers of aesthetic taste than symbols of brute strength, and while ornamental taxidermy could refer to hunting trophies, the genre was much more expansive and included a wide array of preserved animal parts notable for their ability to convey a sense of refinement. As taxidermist L.H. Smith reflected on the association between decorative taxidermy and genteel taste, “[m]oney can fill a house with elegant furniture and costly bric-a-brac, but the pleasure which specimens procured and preserved by yourself cannot be purchased. To procure them one must have a taste for natural history as well as sport. The field and

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the forest must be his study and his recreation grounds.” According to Smith, then, to properly display ornamental taxidermy one must possess the skills of the hunter and naturalist and “love and admire” the objects once preserved. The author argued that this kind of discerning taste could not be purchased but was inborn, suggesting that although any man could hang a pair of antlers on his wall, only those sportsmen with a cultivated sense of aesthetic judgment could do so in a way that conveyed a more refined, gentlemanly notion of virility and prowess. Smith declared that the cases of birds and heads of bucks that adorned his own walls were “distributed carefully, and I hope tastefully,” indicating how animal bodies carried social and cultural capital as markers of exclusivity and gentility and thus retained value greater than simple market price.

Ornamental taxidermy enabled Victorian men and women to transport wildlife and wilderness into their private homes, functioning as a means through which nature was increasingly commodified and domesticated in the late nineteenth century. Victorians’ impulse to consume animals in ornamental form reflected their antimodernist valorization of wilderness as a site of rejuvenation and respite from the hardships of urban-industrial life, and adorning one’s home with the bodies of wild animals reflected their effort to transport the revitalizing properties of nature into one’s private space. William Temple Hornaday attributed the trend to the popular reception of preservationism. In describing the predominance of taxidermied wall mounts, for instance, the naturalist reflected that “[i]ts evolution is due directly to the desire to protect from destruction the more cherished of the single specimens that first began to grace the

95 Smith, *A Sportsman’s Taxidermy and A Sportsman’s Photography*, 46.
96 Ibid., 2.
homes of the lovers of animated nature. In American homes there are to-day thousands of pretty wall cases of choice birds mounted with suitable accessories, either natural or artificial, many with painted backgrounds.⁹⁸ Yet this self-congratulatory rhetoric concerning the collection of taxidermied animals as a form of preservation obscured the ways in which Victorians’ consumption of these objects contributed to the very processes of extinction they regretted.

Victorians’ use of dead animals as objects of home decoration complicated the patriarchal nature of taxidermy in profound ways. The domestication of the practice brought taxidermied specimens into private homes, typically perceived as women’s space, and some contemporary authors argued that women’s love for the objects contributed to processes of imperial expansion abroad.⁹⁹ In his discussion of ornamental taxidermy, Montagu Browne fused imperialist notions of conquest with women’s desire for exotic accessories, writing that “[f]ollowing the example of ladies who indirectly send expeditions to ‘frosty Caucasus or glowing Ind’ to take tithe of animals for the sake of their skins, of birds for their plumes, and of insects for their silk, to be used in adornment, society demands that objects of natural history should not be all relegated to the forgotten shelves of dusty museums, but live as ‘things of beauty and joys forever.’”¹⁰⁰ Brown’s suggestion that women’s frivolous love of things, particularly foreign, unusual, animalistic things, inserted women into the violent process of empire and exploitation. Women’s desire to wear taxidermied animals as accessories fused domesticity with

⁹⁸ Hornaday, *Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting*, 220.
imperialism, and the bodies of dead animals functioned as visible, bodily displays of one’s status in the unequal relationship between metropole and colony.

Adorning one’s home with the bodies of wild animals, as well as with other items from nature, enabled contemporaries to domesticate wilderness and to transport animals into private spaces. Historians Jenny Cook and Andrea Kolasinski Marcinkus have examined women’s engagement with nature fancywork in nineteenth century Canada and the United States, arguing that women’s interest in natural history was materialized in their production of handicrafts that incorporated elements of nature. Cook positions women’s use of plants, flowers, shells, and other natural materials in arts and crafts in the Atlantic Provinces as a means of bringing the outside world into the home, while Marcinkus’s analysis of nature fancywork in the United States suggests that women’s embrace of such hobbies reflected the common nineteenth century desire to arrest the passage of time. Nature handiwork allowed women to freeze aspects of nature within domestic spaces in order to defeat the ephemerality of the world outdoors.  

But although Victorian women’s efforts to bring simulations of nature and wildlife into the home complicated the patriarchal character of taxidermy, the display of hunting trophies enabled sportsmen to resist the feminization of domestic space. As scholars such as Charles Bergman and Garry Marvin have observed, the heads and horns of animals, preserved and mounted upon the walls of one’s home, constituted blatant signifiers of male dominance, materializing and corporealizing patriarchal power in

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spaces typically perceived as feminine. Hunting trophies, in these scholars’ respective analyses, mirrored hunters’ perceptions of themselves as virile conquerors of animals and functioned to define strict boundaries between men and women. The taxidermied trophy in Victorian homes represented a “disembodied but tangible image of masculinity, presiding over male gathering places,” which combatted, in rather graphic ways, the supposedly domesticating and feminizing influence of women’s growing control over the decoration of home spaces.  

The anthropocentric positioning of trophies as authenticators of masculinity and virility thus functioned as a counterpoint to women’s efforts to bring nature into the bourgeois home.

By far the most common way women encountered taxidermy was through the popular turn-of-the-century trend of using bird feathers, wings, and preserved bodies as trimmings on one’s hat. A few nineteenth century taxidermists desired to introduce the practice to women, suggesting that women’s delicate hands and light touch were well suited to the craft and pointing out that women could stuff their own creatures to use as accessories. Instructional articles appeared in women’s magazines that outlined the techniques of taxidermy and taught women how to render animals into fashion accessories. As W.S. Edwards wrote in *The Delineator* in 1897 in a series of three such instructional pieces, “[n]umbers of our common American birds, especially game birds and water-fowl, yield wings, tails and feathers which, with the exercise of a little skill in preparing and blending, will admirably serve for the decoration of hats, in lieu of the costly articles handled by the milliner.” Edwards advised women to obtain their

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specimens from a sportsman companion, implying that they ought not hunt and kill animals themselves. But these women were perceived to be perfectly capable of disassembling the creature, preserving its parts, and recreating the animal in the name of fashion. These kinds of instructional articles provided a relatively straightforward account of the methods of taxidermy and did not euphemize the graphic process in ladylike terms, though the authors did make frequent references to the world of fashion and did occasionally advise women that the craft was not so difficult or gruesome as might be expected. All that was required to produce beautiful specimens worthy of the finest hat was a bit of patience and dedication.104

It is unlikely, however, that very many women picked up the practice of taxidermy for themselves, particularly given the expansive, global chain of production that existed to ensure women across North America had easy access to the coveted bird trimmings. This chain of production began with feather hunters in North and South Africa, Venezuela and Argentina, Southeast Asia and New Guinea, as well as in dozens of other remote locations, where local hunters killed hundreds of thousands of birds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fuelling the global trade in feathered ornaments. These feathers were then sent to urban centres in Europe, particularly to London, which stood as the central hub in the feather trade.105 Importers and wholesalers across the world attended auctions in London to purchase feathers in bulk; Canadian trade and retail periodicals of the time noted the frequency with which buyers travelled to London to secure shipments of the coveted trimmings. Between 1870 and 1920, approximately 360 000 pounds sterling worth of ornamental plumage was shipped to the

United Kingdom, not counting the large volumes of ostrich feathers arriving from South Africa. In the last few decades of the nineteenth century, in fact, feathers were ranked fourth in South Africa’s export commodities after gold, diamonds, and wool.\textsuperscript{106}

This plumage was then shipped to the European continent and to North America, where the feathers were subject to a long process of treatment and manufacture before arriving to retail stores or appearing upon hats. The plumage was first sorted, cleaned, bleached, dyed, strung up on thread, soaked in soap, rinsed, bleached, and dyed once more, and was then curled and trimmed, strung together with other bunches of feathers.\textsuperscript{107}

The completed trimmings were then made available to milliners and hat makers, or directly to consumers through mail order catalogues such as Eaton’s. As such, a woman living in Brandon Manitoba in the early years of the twentieth century could decorate her hat with the preserved body parts of creatures killed in South Africa and shipped across the globe, subject to various transactions and manufacturing treatments along the way, and could thus participate in a global, imperial form of consuming animal bodies. Although some feathers were harvested in the United States, there is little evidence that birds in Canada were killed on any large scale for their plumage, Canadian retailers and manufacturers preferring to purchase feathers wholesale from auctioneers and brokers in the British metropole. A few contemporary observers did, however, notice the presence of Canadian bird species upon women’s hats, indicating the likelihood of some small-scale practices of home taxidermy and millinery.\textsuperscript{108}


\textsuperscript{107} Stein, \textit{Plumes}, 71-2; New York City was large centre of manufacture, but factories treating plumage existed in Toronto and Montreal as well.

\textsuperscript{108} For a contemporary report on practices of harvesting and killing birds for feathers within the United States, see William Temple Hornaday, \textit{Our Vanishing Wildlife: Its Extermination and Preservation} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906). Details on the trade in Canada are patchy, though the dominion’s
Women’s use of taxidermied animals for the purposes of fashion, however, provoked severe criticism from other sportsmen and social commentators. In an article entitled “The Protection of North American Birds” in *The Canadian Record of Science* from 1886, author Alfred H. Mason penned a scathing diatribe that condemned the practice. Mason lamented the destruction of various forms of animal life by careless hunters and taxidermists, but did concede that the killing of nonhuman others to use as specimens of science or as hunting trophies “may be allowed as legitimate, or at least not seriously reprehensible.” Mason identified women’s use of taxidermied birds for fashion as the real crime against nature, criticizing the “bird-wearing gender” for the unceasing onslaught against wildlife, arguing that the most dire issue causing extinction was “the most heartless and least defensible, namely, the sacrifice of birds to fashion, for hat and bonnet ornamentation and personal decoration.” Mason ridiculed women who “content themselves with a few wings fancifully dyed and bespangled, or a wreath of grebe ‘fur,’ usually dyed, and not unfrequently set off with egret-plumes.” The author described the popularity of the fashion in the United States and in Great Britain, and lamented how common the practice had become in Canada, noting the ubiquity of birds upon women’s heads on public streets. As he concluded, “[a] gentleman walking on Yonge Street Toronto, last week, between Trinity Square and Wellesley Street, counted

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entomologist C. Gordon Hewitt commented in the early twentieth century that Canada had finally followed the American lead and prohibited the importation of particular species such as ospreys and aigrettes, and he feared that unless further action was taken, “this embargo on foreign plumage will undoubtedly lead in this country to the killing of valuable native birds.” See C. Gordon Hewitt, *The Conservation of Wild Life of Canada* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921): 144. An exhibition of preserved specimens of birds of paradise, hat plumage, as well as more recent, artistic uses of bird taxidermy as art is currently displayed at the Royal Museum of Alberta is currently being displayed, its curators’ objectives to render the violence of the fashion’s historical commodity chain visible. See Merle Patchett, Kate Foster, Liz Gomez, and Andrea Rae, “Ruffling Feathers: Exhibiting the Monstrous Geographies of the Plumage Trade,” *Antennae* 20 (Spring 2012): 27-54.

110 Ibid., 163.
no less than 38 whole birds on hats, not to mention the wings, etc., used as embellishments.”\textsuperscript{111}

Mason’s article thus offered an intriguing commentary on animals, gender, and commodification, indicating how historical uses of dead animals’ bodies were culturally bound. “Why is not their use for personal decoration \textit{a la sauvage}, as legitimate and defensible as their use for food?” Mason wrote satirically. “Why should we be anxious to preserve our birds? Are they, when alive, of any practical value, or do they contribute in any way to our pleasure or well-being?”\textsuperscript{112} The author then outlined steps taken in Canada and Great Britain to outlaw the practice, describing the efforts of members of Toronto’s natural history society to encourage ministers of local congregations to address the issue during church services and outlining the emergence of anti-plumage wearing societies in the mother country. Mason claimed that the Queen of England herself was a known opponent of the fashion and was considering issuing a ban on the practice, and concluded by blaming “wives, sweethearts, and mothers” for the assault against nature and declaring that unless women themselves curbed the practice, the nation’s bird populations would be soon extinct. “Let them say the word,” Mason challenged women to accept their responsibility for the sacrifice of birds to fashion, “and hundreds of thousands of birds’ lives every year will be preserved… It is earnestly hoped that the ladies of Montreal may be led to see the matter in its true light, and to take some pronounced stand on behalf of the birds, and against the fashion of wearing them.”\textsuperscript{113}

The campaign against bird hats became incredibly popular, and many articles appeared in diverse Canadian periodicals throughout the 1890s that shared similar

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 171.
rhetoric. An article entitled “The Cruelty of Wearing Birds” appeared in a magazine published in London that chastised women’s fickle desire for the accessories as sheer cruelty, describing the mass slaughter of such birds as a terrifying spectacle: “one who went through the hunting grounds speaks of the horror it gave him to hear the pitiful screams of these dying little birds.”  

A Halifax journal similarly regretted the participation of Canadian women in the onslaught against feathered creatures, questioning when “the fair sex” would begin to realize its lack of compassion or humanity. “There is no exhibition of vanity so absolutely inexcusable, or so wantonly cruel,” another author similarly wrote in The Catholic Register in regards to the notorious bird hats. “Wherein lies the utility, the sense or even the beauty, in mounting thousands of little dead songsters for the purpose of perching upon our heads in attitudes as absurd as they are unnatural?” This author was particularly vehement in criticizing women’s folly, arguing that “fashion is the supreme ruler of a woman’s mind, young or old, ugly or pretty, clever or stupid, it matters not,” that “women won’t stop it” because they were simply “fashion plates, the majority of them so wrapped up in dress and vanity that they have lost what little feeling and reason they ever had.” Yet it appears as though such exhortations had little effect. Various trade and retail periodicals published at the same time continued to report the popularity of small mammals, birds, and feathers as trimming for hats and as accessories.

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117 Ibid., 3.
In *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America*, Jennifer Price argues that the controversy over women’s hats in the United States reflected anxiety over changing definitions of womanhood. Price points out that many of those campaigning against the trend were in fact women, typically upper- and upper-middle class women, whose rejection of bird hats caused the accessories to become markers of lower class status. Suggesting that these elite women “tended to exalt the virtues of society women,” Price argues that they constructed lower class women as “less moral and less respectable, and therefore less feminine. And less fashionable,” thus producing the hats as threats to true womanhood. Price writes that nineteenth century characterizations of women positioned them as guardians of morality and civilization, protectors of all things beautiful and spiritual. Women’s use of dead animals as accessories represented a transgression of this duty to uphold the morals and standards of society. This threat against womanhood, then, a concept dearly cherished at the time, explains why the controversy became so popular and widespread.

Few critics of “murderous millinery,” as the feathered hat trend came to be called in the popular press, condemned the global chain of production that existed behind women’s visible display of fashionable plumage. Social commentators’ disparagement of female fickleness and cruelty obscured the thousands of individuals, men and women, who laboured in the plumage trade; rather than addressing the systematic exploitation of

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*Chronicle* 19 no. 8 (August 1885): 211; *The Monetary Times, Trade Review, and Insurance Chronicle* 31 no. 19 (September 1897): 306, amongst many other similar articles. Protectionists’ efforts to lobby various governments were more successful than their attempts to convince consumers to reject the fashion. Key legislation here was the Lacey Act of 1900, the Migratory Bird Act of 1913, and the Tariff Act of 1913 in the United States, and the Plumage Act of 1921 in Britain, all of which were passed as a means of halting the destruction of bird populations both within North America and Abroad. See Stein, *Plumes*, 23-24; Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation*, 150.

wild birds within the structures of consumer capitalism, critics reserved their judgment for consumers of the animalistic fashions. The campaign against bird hats failed because of its focus on the site of consumption instead of the institutionalized exploitation of birds within the global system of plumage production.\textsuperscript{120} Victorian observers did not wish to acknowledge the explicit nature of wildlife commodification within urban-industrial modernity, and the hats threatened to erode the boundary between wilderness and civilization so cherished by contemporary observers. Critics thus pointed to supposedly defective features of women’s sex as the root of the problem; women, naturally, could not possibly understand the intricate workings of nature or truly appreciate animal beings. In their failure to address the systematic, institutionalized ways in which animal extinction was entangled in the web of consumer capitalism, bird protectionists and welfarists failed to alter popular practice; their cries against the disappearance of animals ultimately unable to shape global trends in consumption.

Conclusion

Practices of taxidermy in turn-of-the-century Canada stemmed in part from an antimodernist sense of alienation from wildlife and from a desire to preserve vanishing remnants of animals in representational, material form. Seeking to freeze spectres of wildlife, contemporary observers killed, disassembled, and resurrected nonhuman beings in a variety of guises. Hunting trophies were collected as authentication of sportsmen’s exploits killing animals in the Canadian wilderness, as material signifiers of virility and

\textsuperscript{120} Jennifer Price, \textit{Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America} (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 78. Price acknowledges how debates over feathered millinery obscured the global chain of production in America, but prefers to explain the controversy as a question of class and gender, suggesting that criticism toward bird hats stemmed from the ways in which the objects symbolized a transgression of bourgeois standards of female propriety. This analysis fails to explain, however, why the hats remained extremely popular up until World War I, when wartime rationing curtailed consumption habits.
colonial might, and were characterized as nostalgic tokens of memory, enabling collectors to recall earlier years of animalistic abundance. Taxidermied museum specimens were similarly interpreted as means of defeating the ravages of modernity upon animal populations. By taxidermically rendering these creatures immortal, contemporaries argued, vanishing wildlife could be preserved for future scientific study. The accumulation of taxidermied objects within the spaces of natural history museums enabled Canadian naturalists to assert a sense of national and imperial pride, the ability to kill and display animals constructed as a symbol of the dominion’s power to conquer its vast spaces and wild creatures. Although some forms of ornamental taxidermy such as dead bird fire screens were celebrated as a means of transporting wildlife into the home, the use of taxidermied birds and feathers as hat trimmings was condemned as cruel and heartless, their wearers the passive consumers of objects that threatened to render the intimate links between capitalism and extinction visible.

Upon its death, then, the living creature was subject to many possible reincarnations as material object. Through death, dismemberment, and resurrection the animal might become a souvenir cherished by a sportsman for its extra-economic sentimental value and its social and cultural value, or it might become a specimen exchanged within an international network of scientists and naturalists, whose treatment of the carcass rendered it an instrument of modern science. The animal might also become a consumer good, subject to processing by an international chain of workers, valued for its ability to mark one’s home and body as possessive of elite taste and discernment. Practices of preserving and mounting wild animals also indicated Victorians’ antimodernist efforts to halt the ravages of urban-industrial modernity and to
freeze time, and reflected their regret over the disappearance of such creatures from the Canadian wilderness. Turn-of-the-century observers hoped that taxidermied animals might compensate for the loss of actual wild animals from nature, and thus positioned such specimens as remnants of a rapidly vanishing world.

The display and consumption of animals as taxidermied specimens, as trophies, as specimens, or as ornaments, altered the meaning of the animal referent. Through the processes of death, disassembly, and resurrection—whether in wild animal stories, hunters’ narratives, photography, or taxidermy—wild animals lost their referents as living, sentient beings, becoming abstracted into various parts to be consumed by humans. The preserved bodies of wild animals in Victorian Canada thus vindicated human mastery over animal, despite widespread sentimentalism for the wellbeing of nonhuman creatures and increasing awareness of the imperatives of preservationism. Similar to the ways in which the sportsmen’s code of conduct reframed violence against wild animals as legitimate sport, just as fictional depictions of animal death in literature naturalized notions of human-animal difference, and similar to the ways in which photographic representations of dead animals justified killing by erasing human agency from the act of death, so too did the practice of taxidermy render the fatal exploitation of nonhuman beings societally acceptable, easing human conscience over their consumption of animal bodies for pleasure and profit.

The preserved bodies of wild animals became popular collectible items as Canadians relied less on such creatures for subsistence purposes. Antlers, trophies, rugs,

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121 Carol Adams has identified this paradigmatic cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption in regards to the bodies of both animals and women, which will be discussed much more extensively in the following chapter. See Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, 1990 (Reprint; New York and London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2010).
and other taxidermied animal parts now functioned as emblems of recreation, science, and distinction, and not as items of material sustenance, food, or warmth. These shifting practices of killing animals depended upon the growing ability of modern industry to provide Canadians necessary material comforts. As such, the following chapter considers practices of killing animals for food, tracing patterns of meat eating from wild animals to domestic animals and highlighting the changing ways in which humans consumed nonhuman others.
Figure 1. John Rowley, *The Art of Taxidermy*
Figure 2. Successful Sport, Rod & Gun in Canada
Figure 3. College of Ottawa Museum, East Case. Topley Series, Library and Archives Canada, PA-037174.
Figure 4. Richard Maynard, *Provincial Museum Exhibit of Some British Columbia Native Mammals, 190*. British Columbia Archives, B-03776.
Figure 5. Visitors Look at the Game and Fur Trophy Exhibit at the ‘Colonial and Indian Exhibition’: Dominion of Canada. The Illustrated London News 14 (August 1886)
Figure 6. Specimens in Doctor George’s Natural History Museum, Red Deer, Alberta. Glenbow Archives, NA-103-105.

Figure 7. Mounted Fox and Wolf Heads, Red Deer, Alberta. Glenbow Archives, NA-1572-2.
Figure 8. Albert Hatherly Maynard, *Victoria, Provincial Museum Interior, Taxidermy Shop, 190-*, Royal Archives of British Columbia, G-03172.
Figure 9. Plumage on a Woman’s Hat, Library and Archives Canada.
**Fancy Feathers and Wings.**

No. 429. Mercury wing, in black, white, brown, navy, royal, cardinal and green.

No. 431. Soft painted wing, same colors as No. 429.

No. 432. New shape, soft wing, black only.

No. 433. Mercury wing, curled effect, same colors as No. 429.

No. 489. Curled argente, black only.

No. 962. Fancy argente with seqeins, black only.

No. 993. Small bird with two quills and caper, black and leading fall shades.

No. 594. Coque tail, natural only (black shaded green).

No. 595. Coque tail, flowing effect, natural only.

No. 590. Soft quill, breast effect of natural coque feathers.

No. 596. Mount of soft quills, in black, white and leading fall shades.

No. 597. Quill, round top, in black and staple shades.

No. 516. Large handsome quill, square top, black only.

No. 694. Grebe and heron feather, quill effect, natural only.

No. 688. Pair of grebe, breast effect, white feather tips, natural only, $1.00, or single one.

No. 1032. Mount of curled quills with grebe em-pom, natural only.

No. 1069. Long pelican quill with fancy painted design, natural only.

No. 1089. Black parrot, 3½, or assorted natural shades.

No. 1003. Large black jack-daw, soft effect.

No. 2786. Mount of two quills, in breast effect, black quills, assorted colors, breast feathers.

No. 2570. Mount of fine soft quill, in black or white only.

No. 2980. White angel wing, with natural grebe pads.

No. 3080. New butterfly wing effect, black only.

No. 3060. Argente with fancy sequins, black only.

No. 3109. Natural coque black heron feather, angular wings.

No. 3114. Soft quill, black heron feathers.

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**Figure 10.** Eaton’s Catalogue, 1900
5: Consuming Animal Death: Meat Eating and Modernity

The consumption of commercially produced meat signified Canadian settlers’ status as members of a modern, technologically and industrially sophisticated nation that had overcome the challenges of settlement in a colonial landscape. Industrial meatpacking in part released settlers from reliance on First Nations hunters and trappers for subsistence and helped to liberate men and women from the gruesome labour of killing and butchering their own animals.

Meat had long been an indispensable part of Canadian diets. Early settlers to British North America learned techniques of hunting, trapping, and cooking wild animals from indigenous men and women, and relied on game such as venison, hare, and grouse to satisfy their desires for meat. Nineteenth century observers also raised small numbers of domestic animals such as hogs, cows, and chickens for personal and familial consumption and, consequently, most contemporary men and women were familiar with practices of home slaughtering, butchering, and preserving. At the turn of the century, however, Canadians began to rely less on individually produced meats and more on commercially purchased meats, reflecting growing processes of alienation between humans and the animals they consumed as food. Canada’s industrial meat production business, too, experienced significant growth and modernization; alongside broader processes of urbanization and industrialization, meat magnates such as William Davies, Joseph Flavelle, Donald Gunn, and Pat Burns revolutionized practices of meatpacking in
Modernization in the business of killing, disassembling, and retailing animal bodies adopted a variety of forms. Responding to public concerns over health and safety, meatpackers strove to present their businesses as ones that adhered to modern protocols regarding sanitation and hygiene and as industries that promoted the highest standards of efficiency and economy. As abattoirs migrated spatially from urban to suburban spaces, animal death relocated from the site of consumption to that of production, severing the commodity of meat from its animal origins.

This chapter explores the ways in which these changing patterns of meat consumption, alongside structural transformations in systems of meat production, intersected with the complex cultural meanings and values Canadian men and women associated with acts of eating animals. As turn-of-the-century meat eaters became more and more distanced from the lives and deaths of animals consumed as food, and as animal flesh became sanitized as a mass-produced commodity within a nascent consumer culture, the animal origins of meat became obscured. The bloody processes through which living animals became dead meat were subsumed within the rhetoric of modernity and technological progress, with its emphasis on hygiene, efficiency, and convenience. Over time, eating wild meat came to be seen as uncivilized and unnecessary, while consuming commercially produced flesh signified one’s civility and modernity within a new consumer society. As such, changing practices of eating animals helped to define Canada as a legitimate nation that had overcome the challenges of settlement. But although the modernization of meat marked important changes in human-animal relations and in human attitudes toward animals more broadly, continuities within the cultural meanings of meat eating remained. The consumption of animal flesh continued to
symbolize socioeconomic privilege and gender distinction as well as human mastery over animal; whether one consumed the flesh of a wild creature personally killed or ate a slice of bacon purchased from an urban retailer, the eating of animal bodies signified one’s status as a modern, human subject, master over animal and conqueror of nature.¹

Meat Eating in Nineteenth Century Canada: Wild Game, Domestic Animals, and the Origins of Industrial Meat Production

Settlers in Canada during the second half of the nineteenth century consumed a variety of both wild and domestic animals as meat, their diets shaped by a host of factors such as region, climate, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. Particularly in the earlier years of settlement, contemporary patterns of eating were subject to cycles of hardship and prosperity. The availability of food, including animal flesh, was shaped by seasonal rhythms and by unpredictable fluctuations in the weather, which intersected with economic instability to render settlers’ diets variable. Midcentury immigrants’ memoirs were punctuated by alternating recollections of abundance alongside memories of extreme poverty and hunger. In Susanna Moodie’s Life in the Backwoods: A Sequel to Roughing it in the Bush, for instance, the author described how cycles of plenty and

hardship had shaped the kinds of foods consumed. In recalling a feast enjoyed with friends during an excursion into the wilderness, Moodie listed the vast assortment of foods consumed: venison, pork, chickens, ducks, several kinds of fish, all of which were prepared in many different ways, as well as fruits and vegetables, cheeses, and several different kinds of fruit pies. Yet just a few pages later Moodie describes times of desperate poverty during which her family had only milk, bread, and potatoes to eat. On such occasions, she noted, when meat was difficult to procure, many settlers resorted to trapping and eating small game caught in the bush: “[w]hen entirely destitute of animal food, the different variety of squirrels supplied us with pies, stews, and roasts. Our barn stood at the top of the hill near the bush, and in a trap set for such ‘small deer,’ we often caught from ten to twelve a day. The flesh of the black squirrel is equal to that of the rabbit, and the red, and even the little chissmunk, is palatable when nicely cooked.”

Wild game, then, formed an essential component of nineteenth century Canadians’ diets, particularly during times of economic hardship. The significance of hunted or trapped animals to settlers’ menus was indicated in the lengthy sections on wild game cookery contained in contemporary cookbooks and domestic manuals. Nineteenth century texts such as Catharine Parr Traill’s *The Female Emigrant’s Guide, and Hints on Canadian Housekeeping*, Susanna Moodie’s *Life in the Backwoods*, Grace Denison’s *The New Cook Book*, Margaret Taylor and Frances McNaught’s *The New Galt Cookbook*, as well as other recipe collections such as *The Dominion Home Cook Book* and the *Home Cook Book* contained various recipes and tips on how to prepare game animals for consumption, instructing women how to skin particular birds and mammals, how to

remove fur and feathers, how to discard entrails, and how to cook these creatures.

“November is the high tide of the game season,” Margaret Taylor and Frances McNaught instructed in their 1898 domestic manual, *The New Galt Cookbook*. “Larding is a necessary matter in cooking game, as wild creatures are so active that they are usually not so fat as barnyard fowls. Larding is simply drawing a small piece of salt pork through the surface of the meat. It is easily done, and improves lean, dry pieces of meat. Ducks are the only wild birds that are never larded. Venison is better roasted in a thick layer of paste made of water and flour.”

As Una Abrahamson has observed in *God Bless Our Home: Domestic Life in Nineteenth Century Canada*, nineteenth century Canadian settlers ate all manners of large and small game, fish, and birds, often purchased from local indigenous communities.

While acknowledging the importance of wild game to Canadians’ diets, Parr Traill’s *The Female Emigrant’s Guide* also notes the cultural prejudices toward consuming such creatures that existed at the time, particularly amongst recent arrivals from Great Britain to the backwoods of Canada. The author explained that many Canadians consumed venison, either killed personally or purchased from local indigenous hunters. After instructing readers how to cook properly the flesh of deer, Parr Traill outlined the other various kinds of game eaten in the Canadian wilderness such as partridge, pigeon, and squirrel. Yet alongside her tacit acceptance that eating such animals was often necessary to survive harsh Canadian seasons, the British immigrant

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also acknowledged the revulsion newcomers held toward the practice. “Some people object to them, simply because they have not been accustomed to see them brought to the table, or even to hear of their being used as an article of food, and others consider them as insipid,” Parr Traill wrote in regards to eating black squirrels, defending the need to consume game in the Canadian wilderness. The author went on to argue that “[n]othing can be more cleanly than the habits of these little creatures,” pointing to the healthy diets of squirrels and similar creatures and the importance of these animals to survival in the Canadian backwoods. 

Parr Traill also described the ways in which Canadian men and women prepared hare, ducks, geese, and blackbirds, and noted that, although settlers preferred to consume domesticated animals such as cows or turkeys, the practical realities of navigating Canada’s harsh climate and the demands of rural settlement oftentimes rendered wild animals more convenient to procure. Canadian farmers did not typically raise turkeys for meat, the author explained as an example of the accommodations settlers made in adjusting meat eating habits to circumstantial factors, since these birds were apt to wandering and destroying crops. Domestically raised meats such as turkey were thus reserved for special celebrations like Christmas. As Parr Traill recalled one such holiday, “[a] glorious goose fattened on the rice bed in our lake, was killed for the occasion: turkeys were only to be met with on old cleared farms in those days, and beef was rarely

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seen in the back woods—excepting when some old ox that was considered as superannuated was slaughtered to save it from dying a natural death.”

Although wild game formed an important part of men’s and women’s diets, increased settlement, agricultural development, and gradual urbanization provided greater access to domestically raised and slaughtered meats, particularly pork, for both rural and urban dwellers. Recalling a time when there were no butcher shops or grocery stores, no meat markets or food vendors, for instance, Catharine Parr Traill described the experiences of one early nineteenth century Ontario settler in *The Backwoods of Canada*, who had taught her the value of preserved pork: “‘[o]ur fare knew no other variety than salt pork, potatoes, and sometimes bread, for breakfast; pork and potatoes for dinner, pork and potatoes for supper, with a porridge of Indian corn-flour for the children. Sometimes we had the change of pork without potatoes, and potatoes without pork.’”

Urban dwellers, too, ate their fare share of pork. As Bettina Bradbury has observed, families living in cities such as Montreal oftentimes raised and slaughtered pigs and chickens as a means of self-provisioning. Bradbury estimates that in 1861, over twenty families kept up to nine pigs each within one small urban block in Montreal, which suggests that home butchering was a common practice, at least until reform organizations and city regulations increasingly prohibited the keeping of livestock animals within city spaces. Animals were thus removed from domestic spaces at the same time as they were increasingly commodified and made available as meat.

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Pork was consumed in large quantities owing to the nature of the meat itself. Pigs matured quicker and on less food than did cows, were less useful in providing labour on the farm than were bulls, and hog flesh took to methods of preservation much better than did cow flesh. Whereas preserved beef was rather unsavoury and unappetizing, pork could easily be cured, salted, smoked, brined, or pickled in barrels and made to last up to a full year.\textsuperscript{10} Late nineteenth and early twentieth century cookbooks thus provided detailed instructions on how to preserve hog flesh with these techniques; as Amy Richards described the pickling of pork in her 1895 domestic manual entitled \textit{Cookery}, the meat was to be placed in the pickling solution “while warm after killing,” then allowed to hang, the offal removed and salt rubbed into the flesh. The following day one removed “the slime and the blood which will have flowed from it,” and placed the meat into the brine, turning and rubbing the meat with more salt every day.\textsuperscript{11} The meat was then smoked and, prepared as such, could last a family several months. The tending of meat barrels was a laborious task that required a great deal of women’s time; female settlers also rendered hog fat into lard and made head cheese and sausages with the less desirable cuts of meat, making use of every possible part of the animal.\textsuperscript{12} The preservation of meat through such techniques was essential as a means of easing hardships caused by the unstable climactic and economic fluctuations that rendered food supplies oftentimes unpredictable, and allowed meat eaters to avoid the inferior cuts of meat sold in the marketplace.

\textsuperscript{12} Abrahamson, \textit{God Bless Our Home}, 33.}
Although pork was unquestionably the commonest form of domestic meat consumed in Victorian Canada, beef was also popular, valued more as a luxury item than as a staple necessity. Middle and upper class residents had greater access to freshly killed beef than did rural dwellers; since the flesh of cows did not adapt to techniques of preservation as readily as pork, several hundred pounds of beef had to be consumed relatively quickly in warmer months when freezing meat was not an option. Such practical concerns rendered the slaughtering of cows in summer a potentially wasteful endeavor for isolated families. In a 1910 report to the Department of Agriculture, James Burns Spencer noted that although in most rural areas “the meat diet of the people as a rule consists of pork,” some did enjoy access to beef through local butchers. The author criticized the quality of this beef, however, noting that the cows slaughtered for local consumption were often old, lean, and diseased, cut from those animals deemed unfit to withstand the rigors of shipment to distant markets. Because of the inferior quality of the meat available for purchase, then, pork had “of necessity become the meat food of the people.”

Some smaller towns began to solve the problem of beef’s perishability by forming what were commonly known as beef trusts or beef rings. These rural syndicates enabled residents of a local community to pool their resources and share personal supplies of meat. Membership ran between sixteen to forty members, though most beef rings contained twenty members, and operated over the course of twenty weeks during the summer. Each week a different member furnished one cow to be slaughtered and butchered, its meat distributed equally amongst members of the trust. As Spencer noted,

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these animals typically dressed around four hundred pounds, which meant that each member received approximately twenty pounds of beef per week. Each cow was inspected by an appointed local butcher, who ensured the animals were of acceptable quality and who slaughtered and disassembled the cows according to precise guidelines so that each member was assured an equal share of meat when the season was complete. The distribution of beef was organized so that each member received a steak, a roast, and a boiling piece of flesh each week. By coming together, then, nineteenth century settlers in rural regions of the dominion were able to overcome some of the difficulties involved in securing fresh meat during the summer months.¹⁴

In addition to practices of home and community slaughtering and butchering, then, Victorian Canadians also encountered animal flesh for sale in urban markets and local general stores. One observer of mid-nineteenth century Toronto’s markets at Christmastime, for instance, provided a vivid picture of the variety of animals available for urban consumers to purchase, describing the great piles and displays of animal bodies, ranging from domestic animals such as pigs, cows, and turkeys, as well as a variety of wild animals including deer and bear.¹⁵ Farmers in regions surrounding villages or cities typically slaughtered their own livestock or drove their herds into town, where local butchers killed and disassembled the animals, selling the meat to vendors and retailers.¹⁶

The increasing availability of meat in urban markets and retail stores meant that consumers were less familiar with the production of meat than in earlier years, when settlers had been more involved in the physical processes of killing and butchering.

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¹⁴ Ibid., 102-104.
¹⁶ Abrahamson, God Bless Our Home, 170; Willis, This Packing Business, 21.
animals. Those Canadians who lived in urban centres or who had access to town markets, then, began to buy more and more meat from butchers, relying less on home practices of slaughtering and preserving. Alongside these shifting patterns of consumption, Victorians’ knowledge regarding the production of meat decreased. Given the lack of regulatory structures, standardized inspection procedures, or health codes at the time, authors of cookbooks and household manuals took care to instruct readers how to select cuts of meat from retail stores, reflecting the respective authors’ awareness of the growing separation between humans and the animals they ate. In *The Home Cook Book* from 1888, for instance, a Canadian author cited “English authority” on the subject of meat quality and instructed readers how to assess the sight, smell, and feel of both diseased and healthy cuts of meat, reflecting a presumption of readers’ unfamiliarity with techniques of animal butchery.\(^\text{17}\) Good meat ought to appear rich in colour, marbled, with an open grain, *The Dominion Home Cook Book* concurred, should smell fresh and sweet, not foul or offensive in any way, and must feel soft and yielding to the touch, smooth yet firm without being overly hard. These cookbooks provided specific instructions for choosing different types of meat, from beef to venison, veal to pork, mutton to poultry, advising readers always to determine whether the animal had been freshly killed prior to purchase.\(^\text{18}\) Authors warned their readers about unscrupulous practices in the food industry, advising men and women to purchase meat from

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\(^\text{18}\) *The Dominion Home Cook Book, with Several Hundred Excellent Recipes* (Toronto: Adam Miller, 1868): 23.
respectable butchers and retailers or to seek freshly killed meat from local farmers or neighbours.\textsuperscript{19}

The extent to which turn-of-the-century Canadians consumed meat purchased from stores should not be exaggerated, however; many, even those living within more heavily populated centres, continued to raise, slaughter, and butcher their own animals well into the twentieth century. Many continued to kill their own fresh meat while relying upon commercial meatpackers for processed items.\textsuperscript{20} And the transition from consuming wild game to eating industrially prepared meats occurred at different times across the dominion. As George Colpitts has noted in \textit{Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940}, settlers in the Canadian prairies continued to eat wild animals for a greater period of time than did residents of central and eastern Canada, oftentimes purchasing game meats from indigenous hunters. Colpitts points out that game hunters and butchers were permitted to sell, trade, and barter wild meat, that the sight of “creaking, blood-soaked, meat wagons” was typical in every turn-of-the-century Western town and village.\textsuperscript{21} With the depletion of game and with increased levels of settlement, however, Canadian men and women relied less on wild game and home-slaughtered meat and more on flesh purchased from markets and retailers. Although this transition


\textsuperscript{20} In a self-congratulatory account of the development of their company, Canada Packers suggested in a company history entitled \textit{The Story of Our Products} that prior to the advent of modern meatpacking, Canadians pickled and brined their own meats in order to avoid the “badly trimmed and harshly cured,” “very salty and often very mouldy” meats that were available for purchase in stores. See Canada Packers, \textit{The Story of Our Products} (Kingston: The Jackson Press, 1943): 23.

occurred much later in the Canadian West, then, over time similar patterns in food production and consumption are evident.\textsuperscript{22}

Meat eating was not simply an act of bodily subsistence but was also a culturally significant ritual demonstrative of one’s socioeconomic status. As historians have observed, consuming animal flesh has long been a signifier of masculine virility as well as a symbol of wealth and distinction. Scholars such as Carol Adams and Nick Fiddes have pointed to the ways in which meat has historically been reserved for men and constructed as a source of power and vitality; this association between meat and patriarchy is evident in a variety of historical texts from cookbooks to literature to medical writings.\textsuperscript{23} As one twentieth century Canadian cookbook remarked, “[i]t’s always the case with a saint or a sinner / To be on hand when time for dinner, / But woe unto the maid, who forgets the meat, / For if it is lacking, he will not eat.”\textsuperscript{24} Sidney Watts has argued that although poorer classes in eighteenth century France could not afford expensive cuts of meat such as steaks or roasts as could upper-middle and upper classes, they made do with tougher cuts, stewing such pieces of meat for long periods of time to render them more palatable and tender.\textsuperscript{25} Similarly, Roger Horowitz has traced patterns of meat consumption in the United States from the seventeenth century onwards and has

\textsuperscript{22} Beulah M. Barss has also pointed out that Western residents came to rely on a diet heavy in flour—biscuits, bread, bannock—following the decline of game from the prairies and the arrival of the railroad. See Beulah M. Barss, \textit{The Pioneer Cook: A Historical View of Canadian Prairie Food} (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1980): 29-31, 105-106.


\textsuperscript{24} United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan Section, Women’s Section, \textit{Cook Book} (Saskatoon: United Farmers of Canada, 1940): 68.

suggested that, historically, men and women of lesser means used poorer quality cuts of meat for dishes that required longer cooking times; the quality of beef one encountered at a local eating establishment or at an acquaintance’s home was a clear indicator of socioeconomic status and class privilege. The observations of Watts and Horowitz suggest that class did not determine whether one consumed meat or not but rather shaped the kinds of meat one ate.

The ways in which one ate meat, in addition to the type of animals one consumed, also signified class status in turn-of-the-century Canada; skill in the carving of meat in particular reflected one’s gentility and refinement. Authors of turn-of-the-century domestic manuals took care to explain the intricacies involved in skillfully disassembling cooked animals at the dinner table. “Carving is really an art, and should be cultivated as one,” Grace Denison wrote in *The New Cook Book: A Volume of Tried, Tested and Proven Recipes by the Ladies of Toronto and Other Cities and Towns*. “For much of the success of a good dinner depends upon it, but whether the bad carving so often met with is really due, as is sometimes said, to stupidity, awkwardness, or laziness, is an open question. Practice has much to do with it, and a good knife much more.” Books like *The Dominion Home Cook Book* also gave instructions on how to carve particular types of meat, alongside illustrated diagrams that told readers where to run the knife and how to remove various cuts of flesh from bones and organs, as well as how to serve the food properly for guests. Cookbook authors such as Maria Parloa devoted an entire chapter to “The Art of Carving,” in which she described not simply the methods of slicing meat

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but also the proper techniques of self-comportment when carving. Parloa advised her readers to maintain “a cool head” and “control of one’s temper” when carving, in order to perform the work “scientifically, rapidly, and gracefully.”

Nineteenth century texts emphasized the need for women, too, to become adept at carving up the carcasses of dead animals gracefully at the dinner table, arguing that “[l]adies ought especially to make carving a study…all displays of exertion or violence are in very bad taste…a good knife of moderate size, sufficient length of handle, and great sharpness is requisite; the carving-knife for a lady should be slight, and smaller than that used by gentlemen.” Authors argued that women ought to appear ladylike when carving meat, maintaining a light hand and pleasant demeanor while disassembling animal bodies for guests’ consumption. The ability to carve meat at the dinner table, then, signified one’s adherence to gendered codes of etiquette as well as one’s gentility and refinement.

Victorian eating rituals, particularly those surrounding the consumption of animal flesh, also embodied racially-based notions of civilization and progress. As noted English author Isabella Beeton remarked in her household manual, “[c]reatures of the inferior races eat and drink; man only dines.” Beeton continued to argue that truly civilized peoples were distinguished from lesser races in their practices of cooking food and in their rituals of consuming food, that dining, as opposed to mere eating, was the privilege of civilization. “The rank which a people occupy in the grand scale may be measured by their way of taking their meals,” Beeton observed, “as well as by their way of treating

their women.”31 Beeton’s commentary indicates the ways in which food consumption was coded with a host of cultural meanings tied to racial evolution and gender distinction as well as to technological and industrial innovation. The consumption of food, particularly meat, one of the crudest materials of subsistence—the bloody flesh of animals, after all—had to be conducted in socially and culturally sanctioned ways in order to distinguish oneself from lower classes and races who were less able to suppress crass bodily desires or to maintain proper manners when eating. Victorian dining etiquette was a means of transforming acts that satisfied basic human needs into demonstrations of eliteness and distinctiveness.

John Kasson has argued that the development of elaborate dining rituals in the nineteenth century was reflective of contemporary desires to maintain control over a rapidly changing society during a period of intense urbanization and industrialization. The cultivation of dining etiquette and table manners, Kasson notes, occurred within a context of growing democracy and egalitarianism in the United States, a time when men and women worried about how to maintain order and authority amidst such broader societal changes. Rudeness, in the eyes of contemporary observers, was akin to insubordination, a symbol of one’s disregard for cultural norms and social hierarchies.32 The massive proliferation of etiquette manuals in the nineteenth century was also linked to middle class men’s and women’s increasing access to the world of goods and services; contemporary observers argued that proper conduct of one’s behavior was necessary to ensure that participation in the rituals of consumer capitalism did not become lavish displays of sheer greed or opulence. “The rituals of polite Victorian dining sought to

31 Beeton, Beeton’s Book of Household Management, 905.
elevate and protect the individual dignity and self-possession of all participants,” Kasson writes. “They demanded and sought to develop, above all, the virtues of mutual respect, tact, and self-possession…In Victorian table manners and especially in the conduct of the formal dinner, one may see a great effort to maintain social order, hierarchy, and individuation through the very ritual structures of dining.”

At a time of shifting values and social mobility, then, dining etiquette preserved more traditional hierarchies. Dining was thus a means through which middle and upper classes marked their distinction and status in a rapidly modernizing and urbanizing society; rituals surrounding the consumption of food enabled contemporary observers to position their homes as refined sanctuaries for familial bliss, as sacred spaces apart from the corrupting influences of mass culture and the frantic pace of life in the modern, industrial world. Victorian men and women thus followed elaborate rules of etiquette beyond the norms governing carving meat. When entertaining guests for dinner, dishes were expected to arrive over several courses, many of which contained an assortment of hot and cold meats, arranged in geometric patterns upon the table.

Authors of Canadian domestic manuals instructed female readers on the need to follow proper etiquette, warning readers that “no matter how talented a woman may be, or how useful in church or society, if she is an indifferent housekeeper it is fatal to her influence, a foil to her brilliancy and a blemish in her garments.” These authors advised women how to arrange particular types of dishes around the table—the meat, incidentally, always placed before the master of the household—and explained how properly to set places and arrange guests. “A quiet celerity in eating is preferable to the majestic deliberation which many people consider

33 Ibid., 138-9.
34 Abrahamson, God Bless Our Home, 156-7.
"genteel," the Toronto-based authors of *The Home Cook Book* wrote in 1888. “Bread should never be broken, never cut at table, and should be eaten morsel by morsel, not crumbled into soup or gravy. Food should not be mixed on the plate…Game and chicken are cut up, never picked with the fingers.” The ways in which one ate, then, were as important as the items one consumed in signifying privilege.

**Canada’s Meat Industry: Origins and Modernization**

Although beef was prized as the choicest of meats in Canada during the nineteenth century, pork was the true driving force of the dominion’s commercial meat production industry. The various techniques of salting, brining, and smoking pork long used by settlers not only allowed the meat to resist decay over long periods of time but also added value to it as a commodity and enabled processors to profit from selling such goods commercially. The first modern, large-scale packinghouse in the dominion was that of William Davies, an English immigrant who established a successful business exporting bacon from Canada to Great Britain. Faced with rising demand for his product, Davies began to buy live hogs from farmers instead of the conventional industry practice of purchasing already killed animals, which allowed him to standardize the methods of slaughter, boost the productivity and efficiency of operations, and make use of the offal and other byproducts that processors could not use when animals were killed on farms. Pork thus drove processes of integration of meat production in Canada. Davies then hired Sir Joseph Flavelle and Donald Gunn as his business partners, each experienced in the retail food processing industry, and opened a chain of retail stores in Southern Ontario. As historians such as Michael Bliss and J.S. Willis have noted, Canada’s meat industry during Davies’s rise was shaped by several factors. The American Civil War as well as

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poor weather and animal disease in Great Britain boosted demand for meat exports from the dominion, while internal developments such as population growth, urbanization, and railroad building fostered the expansion of domestic markets for meat.\footnote{Michael Bliss, A Canadian Millionaire: The Life an Business Times of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart. 1858-1939 (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1978): 33-35; Willis, This Packing Business, 27-28.}

Canada’s beef industry adopted a different structure than that of pork. Ranching became particularly popular in Canada after Great Britain banned imports of live cattle from the United States in the 1870s in fear of disease; the transatlantic cattle trade became an integral driving force of the Canadian beef industry, dependent upon recent innovations in transportation technology such as railroads and reliant upon assistance from Ottawa in stimulating exports overseas.\footnote{David H. Breen, The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874-1924 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983): 22. David Breen argues that as opposed to the relatively egalitarian, small-scale character of early American ranching society, cattle raisers in Canada were elite, English and Ontarian gentlemen who formed a socioeconomically and culturally distinctive society.} But although the expansion of railway networks and the development of mechanized slaughtering and dressing technology encouraged the growth of the meat industry, modernity also created its share of problems. Stimulated by the Laurier Liberals’ desire to promote agriculture in the West toward the end of the nineteenth century, settlers hoping to grow grain rather than raise livestock arrived in higher and higher numbers and, as ranchers and farmers struggled for control over the prairies, wheat gradually overtook beef as the primary export driving Western Canadian development. As J.R. Rutherford noted in a report to the Department of Agriculture, newly arrived settlers desired to grow grains and fodder as opposed to raising livestock, which was transforming the prairie landscape.\footnote{J.R. Rutherford, The Cattle Trade of Western Canada (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1909): 6. As another contemporary observer reflected, the “settler with his dogs and barb-wire fences” were taking over the old, established ranches. See Spencer, Beef Raising in Canada, 36.} Whereas political associations between large ranchers and the dominion government had initially
encouraged the rise of a small number of powerful cattlemen, then, the arrival of grain farmers forced these large operators to downsize.\textsuperscript{40}

As such, large and small meat producers coexisted in turn-of-the-century Canada, pointing to the uneven nature of industrial development, though the general trend over time was toward high levels of concentration. Ian MacLachlan has noted that in 1900, over 75\% of beef consumed in Toronto was slaughtered by small scale plants and local butchers, establishments in which two or three men performed all killing and dressing operations, who had the capacity to kill fewer than 200 cattle per week; by 1920, however, over 95\% of beef came from large-scale packinghouses.\textsuperscript{41} Increasing integration of killing and packing operations had spatial and geographical ramifications as well. Slaughter became increasingly removed from urban centers, relocated from the site of consumption to that of production. Packing plants moved to more suburban locations; as MacLachlan observes, most Canadian cities in the early twentieth century had a meatpacking district located along city boundaries near railroad lines. As these plants became further separated from urban centres, they also increased in size, scale, and slaughtering capacity. The new Harris Abattoir slaughter and packinghouse, for instance, which relocated from downtown Toronto to Toronto Junction in the early twentieth century, was able to kill 5000 cattle, 5000 hogs, 1500 calves, and 5000 sheep per year.\textsuperscript{42} Official figures from the 1930s reported a higher level of concentration in Canada’s industry than in the United States, estimating that a small number of large firms

\textsuperscript{40} Breen, \textit{The Canadian Prairie West}, 134.
\textsuperscript{41} Ian MacLachlan, \textit{Kill and Chill: Restructuring Canada’s Beef Commodity Chain} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001): 137-147, 159.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 110-112, 165. For instance, in 1903 the Toronto Union Stockyards opened west of the city in Toronto Junction, which was considerably removed from the city’s urban centre at the time. In the following decade several large packinghouses relocated from more central locations within the city of Toronto to the Junction, partially in response to complaints over the filth, smell, and general noxiousness of the operations.
accounted for over 85% of total meat production within the dominion, though such reports did not account for continued practices of community slaughter, particularly in rural regions.\footnote{Ibid., 165.}

The export of meat abroad was a crucial factor in the modernization and expansion of Canada’s packing industry. Meat producers faced many challenges in shipping animal flesh overseas. Contemporary observers believed ranchers tried to ship healthy, good quality cattle to Great Britain, but they also noted the many difficulties cattle producers faced. In 1892 Great Britain passed legislation than required all cattle to be slaughtered within twenty-four hours of debarkation, forcing producers to ship finished cows as opposed to feeders, which resulted in much greater shrinkage of the animals during shipment.\footnote{Canada Packers, \textit{The Story of Our Products}, 1943.} J.R. Rutherford, advisor to the Department of Agriculture, argued that recent practices in this export trade were “sinfully wasteful, unbusinesslike, and unprofitable to the producer” owing to the deteriorating conditions in which cattle were transported across the dominion—in crowded railcars with no food or water—and subsequently shipped to Great Britain.\footnote{Rutherford, \textit{The Cattle Trade of Western Canada}, 10.} Rutherford blamed such problems on the profits that middlemen, livestock commissioners, railroad and steamship companies, and British butchers earned from the trade as conducted this way, to the detriment of the animals’ health and the cattle raisers’ livelihoods. In the American system, the author pointed out, steers were dehorned, inspected, shipped in less crowded cars with ample food, water, and ventilation, and thus arrived overseas in better condition than did Canadian cattle.\footnote{Ibid., 20.}
In addition to proposing improvements in practices of shipping live cattle abroad, Rutherford suggested that the dominion government encourage the expansion of Canada’s dead meat trade. Shipping beef slaughtered and dressed in Canada, the author argued, held several advantages over trading live cattle. Killing the animals domestically avoided losses from animal shrinkage that occurred when cows were shipped alive over long distances in poor conditions; a federally regulated trade, moreover, would stabilize the profits producers received and temper the wild instability that characterized the industry, thus benefitting ranchers and settlers in the West. Rutherford also pointed to the occurrence of disease in live cattle, particularly to a recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the United States, and argued that such illnesses could be prevented effectively through a comprehensive system of ante and post mortem inspection in a regulated dressed meat trade. But the author was critical of the current state of Canada’s meatpacking industry, pointing to deficiencies in domestic capacities for slaughtering and dressing meat to export. Rutherford argued that Canada lacked sufficient abattoirs, refrigerated rail cars, and shipping capacity required to cultivate a dead meat trade, concluding that the incidence of disease in live animal shipments rendered the development of meatpacking infrastructure “a matter of national importance.”

Still, Rutherford was uncertain whether Canada could ever compete with Chicago in the dead meat trade and thus also encouraged continued investment be made in the export of live cattle.

48 The inability of Canadian packers to compete with their American counterparts due to inferior infrastructure and technology was apparent in the failed attempt of pork packers William Davies and Joseph Flavelle to venture into the beef industry. The two businessmen established the Harris Abattoir Company in order to slaughter, dress, and ship dressed beef from Canada abroad, but faced immediate problems with poor refrigeration during transatlantic voyages, irregular shipping schedules, and reluctance on the part of British butchers to use Canadian beef. See Willis, *This Packing Business*, 34.
Some contemporary observers called for a system of public abattoirs as a tactic of preventing the consolidation of monopolistic practices within the meatpacking industry, as a means of solving infrastructural and technological problems within the meatpacking industry, and as a way of promoting exports of Canadian meats abroad. Proponents of municipally owned and operated slaughterhouses, particularly smaller ranchers and farmers in Western Canada, pointed to the already high shares of the market enjoyed by a small number of manufacturers, arguing that federal support of a chilled meat trade would allow smaller operators to thrive. Frequent articles appeared in the *Grain Growers’ Guide*, for instance, that pointed to the evolution of the meat trust south of the border and that argued Canada ought to learn from American mistakes. “In the United States the business had been undertaken by private enterprise,” one author noted, “and the history of the packing house industry there should have taught us that these establishments must be kept under government control, otherwise they would get into the hands of monopolists, mergers would result and the prices would be up or down according to the interests of the monopolists.” These observers argued that “the greedy meat trust” had “all but ruined the livestock industry,” dominating all aspects of the trade from the raising of steers to the retailing of meat and fixing prices as a means of forcing smaller operators out of business. Municipally regulated slaughtering and packing

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49 MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*, 134. The public abattoir movement was given additional impetus in 1890s when Britain placed increased restrictions on shipments of live cattle out of fears of disease and began importing higher levels of dead meat from Chicago’s packinghouses.
would allow smaller producers to compete with larger operators by providing equal access to killing and cold storage facilities.\textsuperscript{52}

Contemporary observers also argued that a system of publicly owned and operated abattoirs would temper the threat to public health posed by diseased meat. The\textit{ Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery}, for instance, carried an article in 1898 that voiced support for municipal slaughterhouses, the author suggesting that such a system would be cheaper, cleaner, and more efficient than the current system of private ownership, pointing out that the healthiest animals were generally exported overseas while the oldest and sickest were consumed within the dominion, which carried significant health risks. Old, diseased cows were often shipped to Toronto for slaughter and packing as dressed beef and sausage, the author explained, and were consumed by a public unaware of the diseased condition of the animals. The author lamented the existing condition of Toronto’s abattoirs, noting that such establishments were “variously represented, an inspector of the local Board of Health stating that they are not nuisances, while a leading city veterinarian says they are extremely filthy and ill-kept, so much so that ‘if the people of Toronto knew the horrible surroundings and disgusting conditions of the places where their meat is dressed, they would feel too nauseated to eat it.’”\textsuperscript{53} The implementation of carefully controlled abattoirs would eliminate the common practice of driving cattle through city streets, an act “that blocks traffic, frightens people, and at

\textsuperscript{52} Contemporaries argued that “for every beef which a farmer raised to three years old he lost $5.80, while the dealer made $13.60, and the abattoir people or beef combine of Western Canada, made $13.10.” See “The Chilled Meat Question,” 42. Larger operators also criticized unfair practices in the industry; for instance, the Harris Abattoir Company appealed to the federal government in 1906, complaining that the Canadian Pacific Railway provided better fares to the Gordon, Ironside and Fares Co. Ltd. of Winnipeg to the detriment of Harris’s trade. Archives of Ontario, Canada Packers fonds, C-262-6-4 HA .D1. Notice from the Harris Abattoir Company to The Board of Railway Commissioners for Canada, 6 January 1906.

\textsuperscript{53} “Inspection of Meat for the Local Market”\textit{ The Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery} 4 no. 4 (October 1898): 254.
times causes serious accidents”\textsuperscript{54} and would also “do away with the poor, badly equipped, badly managed slaughter-houses, which in many cases are nuisances in their respective neighborhoods.”\textsuperscript{55} Public abattoirs, then, were touted as a means of eliminating unsanitary killing and packing practices and preventing filth and disease.

But despite such appeals to public health and safety as well as to monopolistic inequalities in the meat industry, the public abattoir movement failed to gain support in Ottawa. The federal government dismissed veterinarians’ claims that public ownership was necessary to prevent diseased or tainted meat from reaching markets, and rejected small-scale producers’ arguments that larger corporations unfairly obstructed trade by dominating the industry.\textsuperscript{56} Following a government investigation that failed to find evidence of monopolistic practices, the meat business in Canada became increasingly consolidated within the hands of a few major corporations. The Liberal government’s rejection of the European model of collectively owned and operated slaughter in favour of the American system of private ownership signified a vision for Canada that was less collectivist and more individualist in nature; although cattle raising in Western Canada became less monopolistic in the face of increased agricultural settlement, then, killing, packing and processing meat across the dominion became more and more concentrated as the twentieth century progressed. A merger in 1927 between Harris Abattoir, Gunns Limited, and William Davies Company marked the ascendancy of Canada Packers,

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 257.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 256.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 256. Although legislation existed in Ontario in the 1890s that allowed for the creation of these slaughterhouses, not one municipality had erected such a system.
which, alongside Burns and Company and Swift Canadian, dominated meat production in Canada during the twentieth century.\(^{57}\)

Although the dominion government dismissed any notion of a publicly owned and operated system of slaughter, it did enact legislation that provided for the inspection and regulation of abattoirs as a means of eradicating diseased meat and improving sanitary practice within the packing industry. As Alex Samuel Ostry notes in *Nutrition Policy in Canada, 1870-1939*, early laws seeking to regulate the quality of food in Canada had originated with the rise of free trade in the mid nineteenth century and had evolved in the early years of the twentieth century in response to the growth of canning and processing industries. The 1907 Meat and Canned Foods Act, drafted partially in response to regulatory legislation passed in the United States one year earlier, established a comprehensive framework within which food animals intended for export were inspected both ante and post mortem as a means of ensuring standards of health and sanitation were uniform across the country.\(^{58}\) As an article in the *Taber Free Press* noted, the act had been passed due to the “recent revelations in Chicago,” that is, the public disgust that had resulted from Upton Sinclair’s scathing condemnation of worker exploitation and gross violation of sanitary protocols in his fictional work *The Jungle*, which had cautioned consumers to be wary of uninspected meats produced by unsafe methods of slaughtering and packing.\(^{59}\)

But federal regulation of slaughterhouses and packing plants did not apply to smaller establishments that produced meats for domestic consumption, rather than for

\(^{57}\) MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*, 329. Swift Canadian was the only American company to make inroads in Canada’s meat industry.


export, even though such operations were often chastised as the real propagators of disease. Contemporary observers complained about the sights, smells, and sounds that emanated from these more centrally located killing and disassembling sites, voicing concern over the inhumane treatment of animals in these plants, and articles in popular newspapers criticized the filthy conditions of killing and packing operations, arguing that these sites were a public nuisance and a threat to health. As one government health inspector noted, “[i]n the case of the slaughterhouses which are uninspected, there are a great many which are not only objectionable, but dangerous to the public health.” This particular author continued to point to the noxious smells, the filth, and the pollution that emanated from such establishments, tainting rivers, lakes, and streams and spreading diseases such as tuberculosis, cholera, and other infectious illnesses as well as various parasites. The author claimed that one-third of Canada’s meat was produced under such conditions. Other observers commented on the inhumane practices that occurred at unregulated slaughterhouses and butcher shops. One such author recalled having witnessed animals scalded in boiling water, beaten, and strung up by their legs, all while still alive, noting that “their shrieks were simply heart-rending” and that these animals had learned to run away from cruel slaughterers and butchers whenever possible.

The labour of slaughtering and dressing animals in such plants was exhausting and difficult, particularly before the advent of powered handling equipment and conveyor systems. As Ian MacLachlan describes processes of death and disassembly in the late nineteenth century, animals were first stunned by a blow to the forehead with a pole-axe

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61 “Cruelty in Slaughter Houses” The Edmonton Bulletin (27 December 1907): 1. Ian MacLachlan argues that whether slaughtering facilities were located within urban centres or suburban areas, turn-of-the-century slaughterhouses were “ill-designed, imperfectly drained, and insufficiently lighted and ventilated” and were thus cause for public concern over sanitary conditions. See MacLachlan, Kill and Chill, 127.
and were then stuck and strung up by their hind legs. Floorsmen then detached the legs while siders flayed the hide and disassembled the carcass—all very strenuous labour requiring considerable strength and stamina. The rump sawyer, rumper, gutter, backer, hide dropper, and splitter then continued to disassemble various bones and organs, removing the hide, splitting the carcass, and dressing the meat.62

In contrast to these smaller, turn-of-the-century establishments, larger abattoirs and packing plants operated by powerful industry giants such as Burns and Company and the William Davies Company had taken steps to modernize their respective facilities beginning in the late 1890s. Whereas mid-century practices of meat production had been conducted by a few men who used crude methods of killing with little technological assistance, modern abattoirs employed large numbers of workers who performed specialized tasks along mechanized disassembly lines. The opening of Pat Burns’s new abattoir in turn-of-the-century Calgary, for instance, was hailed as a triumph of modernity and efficiency. The Calgary Weekly Herald provided an overview of the entire operation, marveling at the sophistication of modern processes of animal death and disassembly. Pointing out the advantages of producing dressed meat over shipping live cattle for export, the author provided a detailed explanation of the industrial techniques of meat production employed at Burns’s new plant. The author described how steers and pigs were driven into killing pens, struck with a heavy hammer to the forehead, and transported to skinners and disassemblers, emphasizing the efficient, rationalized division of labour between the various packinghouse workers.63 “To every one of the many men employed in the abattoir is assigned his own particular duty,” the article characterized the

62 MacLachlan, Kill and Chill, 140.
standardization of disassembly processes. “Heads, hearts, hides, hoofs, livers and tongues—each has its own proper attendant, and its own particular place in the great warehouse…Every precaution is taken to ensure cleanliness and economy.”

Similar articles appeared in newspapers and magazines in the years following the publication of *The Jungle* and the passage of the Meat and Canned Goods Act. Journalists and social commentators sought to investigate and publicize the conditions and operations of the meat industry, astutely noting that “just what process of evolution the animals pass through in becoming meat, people are not aware.” An article published in *The Lancet* in 1910 entitled “A Visit to the Meat-Packing Houses and Abattoirs of Toronto,” for instance, provided a summary of Canada’s food inspection legislation as well as a description of several large slaughtering and meatpacking facilities in Southern Ontario. After noting that Canadian meat inspection legislation applied only to meat intended for export and not to that produced for domestic consumption, the author claimed that increased public concern and scrutiny had convinced larger packinghouses to render voluntarily their plants available for inspection, whether the animals they killed were slaughtered for local or foreign consumption. The author continued to recount his experiences touring various packinghouses in Toronto, a few of which, he claimed, rivaled the enormous complexes of Chicago, and concluded that he had been extremely impressed with the sanitary conditions and hygienic practices of these plants.

The author had first visited the abattoir and packinghouse of the William Davies Company, the largest of its kind in the British Empire at the time, describing the processes of death, disassembly, and inspection that occurred within the plant. Killing

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64 Ibid., 4.
took place on the top level of the building, the pigs killed by a slaughterer who slit the throat of each animal as it passed along a powered conveyor belt by its hind legs. Two men then unhooked the animals and tossed them into a scalding bath. The pigs were removed from the water, their bristles removed by a machine, the bodies then subject to further disassembly and processing.\(^6^7\) The author also described methods of inspection, explaining that all animals destined for slaughter were examined by a veterinary inspector prior to killing; those animals found diseased or of inadequate quality were separated from healthy hogs. Post mortem inspection also occurred. The author was impressed with the supposedly high standards of sanitation and hygiene maintained at the meat factories, stating that inspection had been, in his opinion, thorough, systematic, and routinized.\(^6^8\) After post mortem inspection, carcasses were transported to well-ventilated, refrigerated chambers to wait for processing. As the author observed, modern cold storage chambers were essential to the operation of modern packinghouses. The article explained how hams and bacons for export were processed, again emphasizing the high levels of hygiene observed: “[e]xtreme cleanliness distinguished all these processes, and the care observed to avoid any kind of contamination is scrupulously minute…more than 11,000 tines of canned meat are turned out each day from this establishment.”\(^6^9\)

The author then visited the packinghouses of Gunns Limited, a few miles west of Toronto near the Union Stockyards in the Junction, a plant that, in his view, was “modern and well-adapted for its purpose.”\(^7^0\) Arriving unannounced shortly before Christmas, the

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 331.
\(^{68}\) Ibid., 332.
\(^{69}\) Ibid., 332.
\(^{70}\) Ibid., 332. Gunns prided itself on being the first packing company to locate alongside the Union Stockyards, enabling them to transfer animals from stockyard to plant more efficiently. In 1918 the plant slaughtered approximately 3000 hogs daily. Archives of Ontario, Canada Packers fonds. C262-5-2. Untitled document, 1918, p11.
author was awed by the vast scale of slaughter underway: “[t]he pace at which the work was being done was gruesome. Pigs were being slaughtered at the rate of 260 per hour, besides 200 or so bullocks a day.”  

Yet despite the overwhelming number of animals killed and disassembled, the author was careful to note, sanitary procedures and inspections were dutifully followed. The layout of the abattoir itself facilitated hygienic practice, with the slaughtering department located on the top floor of the building, which provided ample light and ventilation and facilitated the efficient use of byproducts. As the author explained, byproducts were easily distributed “by means of shoots and mechanical appliances” that conveyed blood and offal to other departments of the establishment to be transformed into various consumer goods such as lard and sausage casing. The author also emphasized the expertise and skill of “the slaughterers” in ensuring that animals were treated fairly and that operations remained efficient and sanitary.

By the early years of the twentieth century, then, practices of slaughter and disassembly had been considerably modernized. Powered conveyor belts rendered the killing line mobile, while the mobility of the plants themselves removed the disassembly of animals from urban centres as well as from public consciousness. Urban butchers, too, ceased purchasing live animals to kill themselves and began to deal with animals slaughtered in large, remote abattoirs; acts of production became increasingly distanced from practices of consumption. James Burns Spencer noted in a report submitted to the Department of Agriculture that in recent years livestock raisers had been unable to slaughter animals efficiently or to compete with larger packers in producing meat for urban consumers. As a result of such trends, livestock markets such as the Union

71 Ibid., 332.
72 Ibid., 332.
Stockyards in Toronto had evolved to link cattle raisers with commissioners, slaughterers, and butchers, and most purchasing of meat animals was conducted at centralized stockyards. The advent of technologies such as mechanically refrigerated storage chambers and railroad cars transferred the site of killing; initially located near the site of consumption to prevent the decay of meat, slaughter was removed to the site of production. Modernity thus “reversed the principles that had been used previously in fresh meat supplies.” The concentration of the meat industry—both spatially in the emergence of centralized stockyards and meatpacking districts and economically in the hands of a few major corporations—was thus accompanied by processes of dispersal. The modernization of meat production linked producers and consumers through a vast network of buying and selling that was conditioned by the imperatives of industrial capitalism. At the same time, however, such processes also fostered separation, of abattoirs from urban centres, of production from consumption, and of living animal from dead meat.

Modern Meat: Sanitization, Commodification, and the Abstraction of the Animal Referent

Alongside the modernization of the slaughterhouse, with its emphasis on standardization, hygiene, and efficiency, and accompanying the increasing commercialization of mass-produced meat, the cultural meanings surrounding the cooking and consumption of meat also changed. Wild game became less significant in Canadians’ diets, and domestically produced meats, purchased from butchers or retailers, claimed a greater share in the foods men and women ate. At the same time, industrial and

75 Spencer, Beef Raising in Canada, 95.
technological innovations in transforming animals into consumer goods abstracted the animal referent from the resultant commodity, and ordinary Canadians became distanced from animals and from nature more broadly. As the animal basis of Canadians’ diets shifted from wild game to domestic meat, the animal origins of meat became obscured, and contemporary men and women became less and less familiar with techniques of animal killing and disassembly, once a necessary act of home subsistence. At the same time, Canadian meat producers and consumers devised strategies designed to sanitize meat eating, which obscured the increasing entanglement of consumer capitalism with animal exploitation.

Crucially, then, these shifting patterns of meat consumption reveal the ways in which killing animals constituted Canada as a modern, civilized nation. No longer residents of a colonial backwater reliant upon indigenous networks of exchange for subsistence, nor having to kill and butcher animals oneself, changing practices of eating animals contributed to the definition of settlers as modern consumers. They also made animals in the process, defining a spectrum of objectification in which domesticated animals and livestock were viewed more as objects—as meat—than as animals, as less ‘animal’ than the wild creatures of the dominion’s forests that were valued for their capacity to signify individual wealth and power as well as national plentitude and civilization.

As William Cronon has summarized such processes in *Nature’s Metropolis* in regards to Chicago’s meat industry, pointing to the ways in which the production of meat annihilated space by linking vast, cattle-raising hinterlands to urban slaughterhouses and markets, “[t]he packers’ triumph was to further the commodification of meat, to alienate still more its ties to the lives and ecosystems that had ultimately created it.” Cronon describes the ways in which animal bodies became severed from the environments in which they had lived, their sentience removed from human consciousness and transformed into “a neatly wrapped package” that no longer held ties to nature in the minds of consumers. See Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 256-7.
Yet amidst such processes of human-animal separation, industrialization, and nation-building, particular meanings surrounding meat eating remained consistent over time. The ways in which consuming animal flesh signified one’s privileged socioeconomic status and one’s virility remained an enduring feature of consuming animals. Meat eating continued to function as a symbol of human power over nature, signifying one’s ability to dominate animals and, as some scholars have suggested, constituting the very foundation of subjecthood in modernity.

Cookbooks from the nineteenth century were much more explicit about the animal basis of meat than were twentieth century texts, reflecting the ways in which everyday practices of food preparation revealed the growing alienation of turn-of-the-century Canadian men and women from meat’s animal origins. Perhaps most notable in this regard is Isabella Beeton’s *Beeton’s Book of Household Management*, a manual on home economics and cookery published by an English woman in 1861 that was extremely popular in Canada, re-published multiple times in the dominion over the course of the nineteenth century. Beeton’s massive tract outlined a variety of topics related to the production and consumption of meat, including chapters that described the genealogical histories of particular species as well as the physical and behavioural characteristics of the animals. The author justified the inclusion of this kind of information by suggesting that household cooks’ preparations of meat would be much improved if they had greater knowledge of animals more broadly. Arguing that many dishes were prepared poorly and thus spoiled due to cooks’ ignorance of the raising of
meat animals and of the chemistry of cooking flesh, Beeton desired to integrate a supposedly scientific analysis of meat with her recipes.  

Beeton continued to provide a detailed account of how livestock animals were raised, explaining how muscle tissue developed and how the chemistry of animal flesh changed when cooked. The author pointed to the various factors that affected the quality of meat such as diet, lifestyle, and techniques of slaughter. “It is indispensable to the good quality of meat that the animal should be perfectly healthy at the time of its slaughter,” Beeton warned. “However slight the disease in an animal may be, inferiority in the quality of its flesh, as food, is certain to be produced. In most cases, indeed, as the flesh of diseased animals has a tendency to very rapid putrefaction, it becomes not only unwholesome, but absolutely poisonous.” Beeton’s commentary on the lives and habits of the animals whose bodies were to be butchered and eaten by home cooks, woven throughout her collection of recipes, outlined the ways in which people had historically consumed particular animals in specific geographical regions, and described the kinds of thoughts and emotions that characterized specific species. In addition to providing basic recipes of cookery, then, *Beeton’s Book of Household Management* described nearly all aspects of meat production and consumption, from the ancient histories of food animals to contemporary slaughtering practices. In explaining the ways in which animals were slaughtered, for instance, Beeton outlined contemporary methods of killing, describing how animals were struck in the forehead with a hammer or poleaxe. “We hope and believe that these men whose disagreeable duty it is to slaughter the ‘beasts of the field’

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to provide meat for mankind,” she reflected, “inflict as little punishment and cause as little suffering as possible.”

Although explicit about the graphic processes involved in turning animals into meat, Beeton’s text balanced sentimentality toward nonhuman beings with detached observations of the usefulness of such creatures for human consumption. The author explained to readers that “the Animal Kingdom consists of sentient beings” that existed in ways similar to humans, breathing, eating, feeding young, and raising families. Beeton’s sentimentalism became apparent in her descriptions of animals’ inner, emotional lives. “The gentle and timid disposition of the sheep, and its defenceless condition, must very early have attached it to man for motives less selfish than either its fleece or its flesh,” the author reflected, “for it has been proved beyond a doubt that, obtuse as we generally regard it, it is susceptible of a high degree of domesticity, obedience, and affection.” Beeton’s sentimentalism even extended to the much maligned hog, the author arguing that the pig’s dirty, foul reputation derived from its poor treatment at the hands of humans and not from any defect inherent to the animal itself, suggesting that humans ought to provide healthier and cleaner environments for the creatures. The author claimed that pigs were “capable of education” and were “equally amenable with other animals to caresses and kindness,” pointing to “evidence of education where so generally obtuse an animal may be taught not only to spell, but couple figures and give dates correctly,” thus acknowledging not just pigs’ sentience and capacity for emotionality but also the animals’ high degree of intelligence and

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79 Ibid., 275.
80 Ibid., 271.
81 Ibid., 329.
82 Ibid., 364.
rationality.\textsuperscript{83} Beeton’s sentimentalism surfaced again when explaining the processes of veal production; as she noted anthropomorphically, cows’ gestation period was nine months, like that of humans, and “the affection and solicitude she evinces for her offspring is more human in its tenderness and intensity than is displayed by any other animal.”\textsuperscript{84} Such sentiments led the author to condemn inhumane practices within the veal industry and to recommend kinder treatment of the animals.

Yet Beeton’s empathy did not prevent her from discussing the many ways in which animals’ dead bodies were rendered into consumable objects for the enjoyment of humans, nor did she question the human prerogative to conquer nonhuman beings and consume their flesh: “[t]o man they are immediately useful in various ways. Some of their bodies afford him food, their skin shoes, and their fleece clothes. Some of them unite with him in participating the dangers of combat with an enemy, and others assist him in the chase, in exterminating wilder sorts, or banishing them from the haunts of civilization.”\textsuperscript{85} The author’s reflections on the emotional and rational lives of animals thus coexisted alongside straightforward, graphic instructions on how to kill and disassemble animals. Immediately following her acknowledgement of hogs’ capacity for thought and emotion, for instance, appeared instructions on how to butcher and disembowel a recently killed pig: “[p]ut the pig into cold water directly it is killed; let it remain for a few minutes, then immerse it in a large pan of boiling water for 2 minutes. Take it out, lay it on a table, and pull off the hair as quickly as possible. When the skin looks clean, make a slit down the belly, take out the entrails, well clean the nostrils and

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 397.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 402.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 271.
ears, wash the pig in cold water, and wipe it thoroughly dry.⁸⁶ Appearing alongside images of whole hogs’ heads and bodies on dinner plates, such sentiments did not, therefore, attempt to obscure the animal origins of meat. Beeton thus rendered animal death central to her discussion of cooking, and her recipes, commentaries, and images were explicit, graphic reminders of the link between meat and animals, indicators that the animality of meat had not yet become something to be deliberately euphemized.⁸⁷

Other cookbooks from the nineteenth century were similarly frank about the animal origins of meat and explained to readers the physiological characteristics of animal bodies, the desirable and undesirable cuts of meat for each species, and the factors one ought to assess when determining the quality of animal flesh. Authors writing toward the end of the century also acknowledged the ways in which patterns of meat consumption were changing and combined discussions of meat’s animal genesis with explanations of recent developments in meat production technologies. These particular authors desired to educate readers in how to select proper cuts of meat, speaking to the growing separation between producers and consumers of animal flesh.⁸⁸

Alongside the industrialization and modernization of meat production, then, came changes in everyday practices of consumption and in the cultural meanings linked to

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⁸⁶ Ibid., 397.
⁸⁷ Other cookbooks suggested that whole animals presented at the dinner table could be a thing of beauty. Marion Harland, for instance, wrote that “I have before me now the vision of a pig I once saw served whole on the table of a friend, that forbids me ever to mutilate him before the guests have a chance to feast their eyes upon the goodly picture. He was done to a turn—a rich, even brown, without a seam or crack from head to tail, and he knelt in a bed of deep-green parsley, alternately with bunches of whitish-green celery topes (the inner and outer leaves); a garland of the same was about his neck, and in his mouth was a tuft of white cauliflower, surrounded by a setting of curled parsley. Very simple you see, but I never beheld a more ornamental roast.” See Harland, *Common Sense in the Household*, 120. Beeton’s recipes were also accompanied by images that pictured animals in various stages of life, disassembly, and death, from young creatures frolicking in meadows to butchered pieces of flesh lying upon ornate platters. Moreover, as the text’s images indicate, meats were prepared and served in partially fragmented states, with whole heads and relatively intact bodies adorning elaborate plates on the dinner table.
meat eating. Authors such as Beeton and Parloa were writing during a profound period of transition in which the labour of butchery and disassembly was gradually being transferred from the household to the commercial slaughterhouse. Consequently, authors of nineteenth century cookbooks pointed out that readers could likely purchase various cuts of meat and organs from retail stores and butchers that were ready for the oven but that consumers must also be aware of the ways in which these animal foods had been fabricated. “A calf’s head may be bought ready for cooking from the butcher’s,” cookbook author Mary Jewry wrote, “but it is as well to give directions for the cook in all possible circumstances, we will say here that if she has a calf’s head to prepare with the hair on it, she must have ready a pan of scalding water.” Other texts suggested that while women should not be expected to perform the actual slaughtering and butchering of the animals, they ought to be familiar with the procedures, however distasteful. “A month-old pig, if it be well-grown and plump, is best for this purpose,” Marion Harland wrote in *Common Sense in the Household*, a popular nineteenth century domestic manual published in both Canada and the United States, explaining how to prepare roast pig. “It is hardly possible that any lady housekeeper will ever be called upon to do the butcher’s work upon the bodies of full-grown hogs, or even ‘shoat’—a task that requires the use of hatchet or cleaver.” Yet Harland continued to suggest that all women ought to know “how to clean and dress the baby pig,” and instructed her readers on how to disassemble and disembowel such creatures. Instructions like this indicated the ways in which turn-of-the-century observers occupied a place between two fundamentally different systems of producing and consuming animals as meat; neither wholly self-sufficient nor utterly

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reliant on urban retailers, contemporary observers blended knowledge of slaughter and butchery with more convenient, sanitized opportunities to purchase animal parts already killed and dressed.

The transition of Canadians’ diets, from the consumption of wild game to the eating of commercial, domestic meat, helped to define contemporary men and women as members of a modern, technologically sophisticated nation. No longer reliant upon foraging for food in the wilderness nor upon purchasing game from indigenous hunters and trappers, the widespread availability of industrial meat positioned Canada as a legitimate nation that had overcome the obstacles to settlement in a colonial landscape. At the same time, Canadians attributed wild animals with a degree of romantic, sentimental value that did not apply to the domesticated creatures consumed as meat, thus constituting animals at the same time as animals constituted them.

Cookbooks from the early decades of the twentieth century reflected this shift in patterns of consumption from wild game to domestic meat. Twentieth century cookbooks did not eliminate recipes for wild game altogether, but they did reflect an obvious and notable shift toward the consumption of mass-produced meats made from domestically raised and slaughtered animals. Cookbooks such as those authored by women’s church groups, for instance, typically contained a small number of recipes for the preparation of wild game animals; while the general instructions for such recipes did not differ terribly much from those contained in older cookbooks, recipes for dishes using pork, beef, and poultry gradually replaced recipes for venison, hare, and wild turkey. By the interwar years many texts began to exclude recipes for game altogether and focused instead on instructing readers how to prepare mass-produced meats purchased from retail stores,
omitting instructions on butchery and disassembly. But the effects of industrial meat production were experienced unevenly across the country, mediated by region, socioeconomic status, and culture. Cookbooks from the prairies, for instance, continued to provide instructions on the preparation of wild game and on the preservation of meat such as salt pork well into the twentieth century. The continuing efforts of rural women to preserve their own meats, alongside their consumption of game animals such as hare and squirrel, then, illustrate the ways in which home slaughtering and butchering did not completely collapse despite the advent of mass produced, industrial meat.  

Alongside the gradual and uneven transition from wild game to domestic meat, and as meatpackers increasingly emphasized hygiene and efficiency in their operations, the act of consuming animal flesh was also sanitized. Company cookbooks, for instance, rhetorically disassociated meat from its bloody animal origins. *The Shamrock Cook Book*, published by Pat Burns & Company as a means of promoting its Shamrock brand of processed pork products, is particularly illustrative of such efforts to sanitize meat eating through the rhetoric of modernity and hygiene. The introduction of the text explains that the recipes contained within had been compiled by a woman who held “a first class diploma of cookery” as well as a degree from “the Royal Sanitary Institute” and who had thoroughly tested each recipe to ensure each was economical as well as delicious. Appearing alongside recipes for soups, stews, and roasted meats in this cookbook were advertising slogans that boasted of the company’s high standards of hygiene and efficiency and that promoted the vast selection of processed meats available to modern consumers. “It will surprise you to know how much there is to choose from in one of our

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markets,” the text claimed. “Ask the manager for his suggestions…We can furnish you with meats all ready to use—Roast Beef among others—when time presses.”

Burns & Company cookbooks constantly reminded readers of the highly developed sanitary protocols the giant meatpacking company supposedly followed. Scattered amongst recipes for baked ham and bacon sandwiches, for instance, were declarations such as “[d]on’t forget the Government Inspection on all our meats. It insures your family health,” ‘[n]o more modern meat market is operated on the American continent than ours at the corner of Eighth Avenue and 2nd Street East, Calgary,” and “[t]he utmost care is taken in making our sausage—the kitchen is a model of cleanliness—all meat is Government Inspected meat.” These cookbooks emphasized the cleanliness of operations at Burns & Company as well as the vast variety of goods available for purchase, illustrating the ways in which changing patterns of meat consumption were shaped by the imperatives and values of modern consumer society more broadly. Writing in the years following public criticism over conditions in the meatpacking industry as described in Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle, large meatpackers such as Burns emphasized the value they placed on government inspection and desired to present themselves as open to public scrutiny, encouraging ordinary men and women to tour their facilities: “[y]ou are invited to inspect, criticize and suggest. Our best friends are our honest critics…A visit to our mammoth Calgary Packing-house will interest and astonish you… We have already entertained many parties of visitors, including the Calgary Consumers’ League and Domestic Science Classes from the various schools.”

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92 Burns & Co., The Shamrock cookbook, 3.
93 Ibid., 6, 9.
94 Ibid., 27, 28.
Traces of blood, evidence of death, and reminders of animal mortality were thus removed from public consciousness as the twentieth century progressed, a shift that was also evident in the physical design and layout of butcher shops, meat markets, and retail stores in which men and women purchased animal flesh. Consider, for instance, photographic images depicting the interiors of such establishments. Earlier photographs illustrate butcher shops that are dark, crowded, technologically unsophisticated, and, most notably, that are adorned with various markers of animality such as taxidermied animal heads on the walls or entire carcasses dangling from the ceilings. Some of these photographs also indicate that small butcher shops disassembled wild game such as deer and moose in addition to domesticated animals. Later images, however, captured in more recently built butcher shops, reveal the presence of industrial equipment and an atmosphere of hygiene and efficiency more broadly. In contrast to the dingy old shops with wooden walls and crude tools, these modern sites of meat distribution were bright, clean, and airy, antlers and hanging carcasses removed from public view, plants, chandeliers, and white marble countertops taking the place of disassembled, fragmented parts of animals’ bodies. 

Visitors to such shops encountered meat more as a sanitized commodity, displayed in cellophane wrap within glass cases, and less as the actual flesh of animals. The rhetoric of efficiency, sanitation, and economy within the culture of meat production and meat consumption, then, functioned as one means through which the mass

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95 Interior of Duggan & Gau Butcher Shop, Camrose, Alberta, NA-3462-24, Glenbow Archives; Interior of a Meat Market, Lacombe, Alberta, ND-2-132, Glenbow Archives; Pat Burns Meat Market, Calgary, Alberta, NA-1469-18, Glenbow Archives.
exploitation of animals for human pleasure was legitimized in early twentieth century Canada.  

The structural and rhetorical sanitization of meat production and consumption reflected deeper changes in human attitudes toward animals more broadly. Whereas nineteenth century cooking manuals discussed the histories, habits, and behaviours of animals consumed as food and provided detailed instructions on butchery and disassembly, twentieth century cookbooks assumed meat eaters purchased their flesh prepackaged from local retailers; as *The Shamrock Cookbook* proclaimed, “[e]ach Burns’ Shamrock and Hormel flavor-sealed food comes to you in the original package in which it was sealed before being cooked. It is cooked in its sealed container for exactly the number of minutes, and at exactly the temperature which makes for perfection.”  

Instead of explaining how to remove a calf’s brain for boiling or how to scald a suckling pig, then, these later cookbooks advised readers to have their butcher prepare cuts of meat for specific dishes and no longer provided instructions on killing and butchering. These newer cookbooks, alongside changing structures of meat production and changing habits of meat consumption, thus functioned to render the animal origins of meat invisible, obscuring the processes of animal birth, death, and disassembly that lurked behind every steak or pork chop.

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96 The sanitization of meat was also largely a kind of self-serving, rhetorical strategy on the part of large meatpackers, who wished to simply obscure the more bloody and gory aspects of their operations from the public mind more than they desired to eliminate filth and gore altogether. Yet, many of these plants had relocated to suburban locations, as discussed earlier, which eliminated the more noxious sights and smells from public consciousness. Moreover, Ian MacLachlan has argued that, as opposed to the United States, Canada’s industrial meatpacking industry consolidated following federal inspection legislation and, as such, were consistently found to be much more sanitary and hygienic than their American counterparts. See MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*, 127-130.

97 Burns & Co., *60 ways to serve Burns’,* 19.

Just as the rhetoric of hygiene and efficiency sanitized meat, so too did the physical separation of meat eating from meat producing obscure the animal origins of meat, removing the spectre of animal death from the consciousness of ordinary men and women. I have already pointed to the ways in which the modernization of slaughterhouses entailed the removal of such operations from urban centres. Historians have suggested that such processes of dispersal allowed consumers to exploit animals without considering the acts of violence involved in producing meat. Paula Young Lee has argued that over the course of the nineteenth century, bourgeois urban residents in Europe increasingly complained of the foul and offensive character of abattoirs and butcher shops. As a means of soothing more refined, modern sensibilities, suburban abattoirs eliminated the “mundane horror” of witnessing animal death in public spaces.99 The changing rhetoric surrounding new methods of slaughtering and butchering, premised upon notions of standardization, efficiency, health, and hygiene, Lee writes, functioned to obscure the violence of animal death, translating the once-terrifying spectacle into something utterly sanitized, indicative of modern technological and industrial progress. Lee positions the slaughterhouse as an “ideological representation,” analyzing the ways in which the transition from pre-industrial to industrial slaughterhouses altered the visibility of human violence toward animals. Although the dispersal of slaughterhouses to less visible sites removed the discernibility of animal death, it did not, of course, eliminate acts of killing.100

In an article on the rise of the modern slaughterhouse in Britain, Chris Otter similarly argues that the development of industrial methods of meat production sanitized the bloody processes of animal death. In order for animal carcasses to become true commodities and consumer goods, Otter contends, all visible signs of blood and violence had to be rendered invisible. Otter cites the work of anthropologist Norbert Elias, who suggested that the rhetoric of civilization in the western world obscured, but did not eradicate, these obvious reminders of violence. Animals were increasingly commodified in the industrial world, but they were also subject to the rhetoric of civilization, which sanitized the objectification and consumption of animal bodies. As Otter notes, those involved in slaughterhouse reform often used “civilization” as a trope to obscure gory processes of animal death; the traditional abattoir became synonymous with filth and disease, while the modern slaughterhouse became linked to recent medical advances in germ theory and hygiene and to technological innovations such as mechanized disassembly equipment.

Once a site of blood and violence, the modern abattoir had become a symbol of modern engineering and technological sophistication, and death became increasingly removed from public awareness. As Otter notes, “civilization developed by consuming more meat but devoting more effort to efface the gory evidence of its production.”101 The bloody flesh of animals was subject to capitalist techniques of transformation and, through the process of sanitization, the animal became an abstract commodity. “The abattoir, then, is a technical apparatus that compels or obliges society to forget its bloodier aspects, precisely those from which it derives its virility, by making them almost

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wholly invisible,” Otter concludes, characterizing meat as “the most magic and beguiling of commodities” in its remarkable ability to erase vestiges of its violent origins.  

Historians have also examined the ways in which changing technologies of slaughter expressed profound alterations in human attitudes toward animals and nature more broadly. Paula Young Lee has argued that the modernization of slaughterhouses constituted a fundamental reorganization in human-animal relations, noting that the rise of industrial abattoirs “institutionalized the industrial compartmentalization of a particular segment of the animal kingdom. Today, livestock animals are subsumed into a linear system that conceives them mostly as meat, bypassing traditional agricultural pathways that first utilized cows, sheep, and goats as valuable sources of milk, muscle power, wool, and fertilizer.” Modern, commercial systems of meat production enabled men and women to evade the seasonal demands of the natural environment and to dominate the life cycles of animals, further entrenching notions of human mastery over animal. Slaughterhouses obey an “inhuman logic of institutional control,” Lee maintains, and have thus produced a radical disconnect in which the consumption of meat has been severed from awareness of the animal origins of the food.  

Jonathan Burt has made similar observations, suggesting that “meat-eating expresses control over animals” and that “the finished meat product exemplifies an alienation that characterizes a more general structure of exploitation and domination…these cultural attitudes are also a particular product, not of the universals of human-animal relations, but of a particular configuration of technology, the animal, and discourses of efficiency, breeding, health,

102 Ibid., 106.
103 Young Lee, “Introduction,” 2.
and ethics.” Burt, then, seeks to remind historians not to forget the ways in which human-animal relations have been mediated over time by technology.

In The Sexual Politics of Meat, Carol Adams argues that each act of meat eating conceals a profound absence—the death of an animal—and that the invisibility of animal exploitation is partly due to the patriarchal nature of society more generally. “Without animals there would be no meat eating,” Adams writes of the ways in which animals lose their referent through acts of death and butchery, “yet they are absent from the act of eating meat because they have been transformed into food.” Animals are thus rendered absent, in this analysis, in three fundamental ways: linguistically, animals are euphemistically renamed, which obscures the animal origins of meat—cows become steak, for instance—physically, animals are killed and disassembled, and metaphorically, animal exploitation is used to refer to the plight of oppressed groups of humans so that describing a woman as a piece of meat becomes a derogatory insult to both human and animal. Seeking to associate the exploitation of women with that of animals, Adams argues that violence toward each becomes obscured through similar processes of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption, which ultimately sever the subject from its referent. Animals and women are objectified, linguistically, physically, and metaphorically, transformed into objects rather than living beings, fragmented into component parts—breasts, legs, and so on—and finally consumed by patriarchal society, an act that marks the utter and irrevocable annihilation of the original living subject. “Without its referent point of the slaughtered, bleeding, butchered animal,” Adams writes of the metaphorical consumption of animals, “meat becomes a free-floating image.

is seen as a vehicle of meaning and not as inherently meaningful; the referent ‘animal’ has been consumed. ‘Meat’ becomes a term to express women’s oppression, used equally by patriarchy and feminists, who say that women are ‘pieces of meat.’ Because of the absence of the actual referent, meat as metaphor is easily adaptable.”

Adams also points to the ways in which this cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption are entangled with the expansion of consumer capitalism, suggesting that this relationship has become so commonplace that it is no longer visible. Emphasizing the link between dismemberment and capitalism, Adams argues that “[t]he dismemberment of the human body is not so much a construct of modern capitalism as modern capitalism is a construct built on dismemberment and fragmentation.” Through the linguistic, metaphorical, and physical translation of animals into meat as an abstract commodity, then, through the objectification, fragmentation, and consumption of animal bodies under the conditions of consumer capitalism within industrial modernity, humans no longer associate meat eating with killing and consuming animals. The Sexual Politics of Meat concludes by suggesting that men’s and women’s desires to forget the animal origins of meat signifies humans’ efforts to ignore processes of animal exploitation more generally. Adams characterizes oppression as institutionally entrenched in society, in both formal structures and in linguistic practices. “Because animals have been made absent references,” the author concludes, “it is not often while eating meat that one thinks: ‘I am now interacting with an animal.’”

107 Ibid., 73-75.
108 Ibid., 80.
109 Ibid., 94-96. In Meat: A Natural Symbol Nick Fiddes similarly emphasizes the sanitization of meat over time, pointing to the various ways in which humans have obscured the animal origins of food. Fiddes
Thus, the sanitization of meat in modernity—the gradual transformation of animal flesh into a capitalist commodity—was not reflective of a more benevolent approach to the natural world. Quite the opposite, the expansion of urban-industrial consumer capitalism embodied the desire to conquer nature more totally than ever before, and the consumption of animals functioned as the ultimate symbol of human mastery. As Nick Fiddes reflects in *Meat: A Natural Symbol*, human consumption of animal bodies signifies a tangible, material manifestation of human domination over animal and nature. Fiddes elaborates on the mutually constitutive relationship between acts of meat eating and cultural constructions of human mastery, pointing out that eating meat defines humans as superior beings, that human superiority does not pre-exist acts of eating animals but is itself constituted through consuming animals.\(^{110}\) Human belief in the edibility of animals and the inedibility of humans, moreover, defines boundaries of kinship and constitutes animals as irrevocably other. The ultimate taboo of cannibalism, for instance, operates to denigrate marginalized peoples as inhuman; the beings that we do or do not eat constitute the boundary between self and other in a hierarchical society premised upon exclusionary notions of difference. We do not eat other humans, nor do we eat primates, nor do we eat our pets—beings considered biological or familial kin.\(^{111}\) As a cultural act, then, meat eating sets the boundaries of belonging and reinforces human superiority in the hierarchy of species.

Recall Charles Roberts’s novella *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, discussed at length in chapter one, the tale of a young woman named Miranda who shares an intimate

\(^{110}\) Ibid., 65.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., 123-9.
sense of kinship with the wild animals that inhabit the woods around her home. Stemming from her identification with these beings, Miranda rejects meat eating, feeling repulsed at the thought of consuming the flesh of her kin. After her mother Kirstie falls ill, however, family friend Dave convinces Miranda that Kirstie needs meat to regain her health. “The instant she smelled that savour Kirstie knew that he was right,” Roberts writes. “Steak, venison steak fried in butter, was what she required. For weeks, she had had no appetite; now she was ravenous. Moreover, a thousand lesser forces, set in motion by Dave’s long talks, were impelling her to just such a change as the eating of flesh would symbolize to her.”\textsuperscript{112} After a few weeks of consuming meat, Kirstie’s health returned and Miranda, too, began to contemplate eating animal flesh: “[w]ith a kind of horror she realized that she was at war with herself—that one half her nature was really more than ready to partake of the forbidden food.”\textsuperscript{113} In this tale, meat eating constitutes one’s status as human and ultimately separates Miranda from the world of animals; the bonds of human kinship prevail over possibilities of overcoming human-animal difference, as symbolized by the renunciation of meat eating.

Some scholars have argued that consuming animals has become the very definition of human subjecthood in modernity, suggesting that meat eating is the most basic way in which our species has defined itself as human. In an article entitled “Eating Well,” for instance, Jacques Derrida uses the concept of “carno-phallogocentrism” to argue that definitions of subjectivity in the western world are premised upon three

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}, 222. Carol Adams has argued that literary instances of vegetarianism function as interruptions of narratives of dominance, rejecting male acts of violence and seeking pacifist identification with animals. See Adams, \textit{The Sexual Politics of Meat}, 163. In Roberts’s story, however, it is unlikely that the author was opposing women’s oppression through Miranda’s vegetarianism. Moreover, the story ends with a presumed repudiation of vegetarianism and a reaffirmation of human-animal difference, thus positioning meat eating as a marker of human subjecthood.
intersecting traits: the capacity for language and rational thought, the eating of animal flesh, and the status of being male. Matthew Calarco suggests that Derrida’s theory of carno-phallogocentrism explains the ways in which being a male meat eater has functioned historically to demarcate boundaries between others classified as lesser beings such as women and animals who have been denied full subjectivity in western discourse, highlighting the similarities of such ideas with Carol Adams’s identification of the overlapping processes of female and animal exploitation. As Calarco explains, Derrida does not simply wish to highlight the historical ways in which meat eating has produced various kinds of exclusions but seeks to prove that “being a carnivore is at the very heart of becoming a full subject in contemporary society.” As Fiddes points out, those who renounce rituals of consuming flesh are oftentimes chastised for their failure to embrace dominant narratives of subjecthood. The ways in which one defines oneself as a human subject, then, is a process marked by a host of violent exclusions, the consumption of animal flesh functioning as one such way in which humanity has asserted its dominance over animals in order to define modern subjectivity.

Conclusion

Eating meat helped to define humans as modern subjects. The transition from a reliance on wild game to domesticated meat symbolized Canada’s evolution from frontier colony to masterful nation and emergent empire. Settlers were initially reliant upon First Nations hunters and trappers for meat, as well as upon their own practices of hunting, trapping, and scavenging wild creatures from the dominion’s forests, but the advent of

industrial systems of meat production contributed to a sense of success in Canada’s colonial project; meatpacking was thus a part of Canadian nation-building and empire-building in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The rhetoric of sanitization and hygiene within commercial systems of meat production, moreover, and the abstraction of the animal referent, while obscuring the animal origins of meat and legitimizing the mass exploitation of animals, also functioned to conceal the ways in which consuming animals constituted Canada as a colonizing entity. Taken for granted as a necessary aspect of life, meat eating was in fact an act laden with a host of cultural meanings tied to processes of imperialism and patriarchy.

From the second half of the nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth, structural changes in the processes and technologies of meat production intersected with shifting practices of meat consumption. In the mid to late nineteenth century the production and consumption of meat often occurred in domestic spaces, as settlers balanced reliance on hunting and trapping wild game for meat with slaughtering and butchering their own livestock, particularly hogs. The gradual transition from wild game to domestic meat reflected broader patterns of urbanization and industrialization, indicating the ways in which animal populations declined in the face of higher levels of settlement as well as the increased capacities of modern meat producers to raise vast amounts of animals for human consumption. During this period of transition, local knowledge of slaughtering and butchering animals slowly eroded as the expansion of commercial meatpacking and the growth of consumer capitalism more broadly altered the eating habits of ordinary men and women.
As the production of meat became increasingly separated from the consumption of meat, and as meatpacking operations became standardized, mechanized, and sanitized, the bloody processes haunting the production of meat as a modern consumer good became more and more obscured, rendered invisible from public scrutiny. This process of abstraction allowed men and women to consume meat without contemplating the troubling reality of animal death; contemporary meat eaters became distanced from the animal origins of meat and from the world of nature that supplied urban dinner tables. These shifting patterns of meat consumption, moreover, reflected deeper changes in humans’ attitudes toward nature. Responding to the growth of preservationist sentiment and awareness of animal extinction, wild animals were increasingly valorized as deserving of human protection, while domesticated animals, subject to the whims of human desire, were rendered ever more disposable. No longer valued for their labour, cows’ and other such creatures’ entire lives existed to satisfy human desire.

In order to legitimate the rapidly escalating scale of animal death in the urban-industrial world, Canadian observers devised a host of strategies that materially and rhetorically abstracted meat from its animal origins; through various processes of sanitization and through the logic of consumer capitalism, living animals became translated into objects for human consumption. Turn-of-the-century men and women positioned the consumption of animal flesh as an indicator of one’s socioeconomic privilege and one’s civilized status, and argued that meat eating was a source of strength and virility. They also masked the bloody violence of meat production by physically removing the spectacle of animal death and butchery from urban centres to more isolated

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116 Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan have argued that wild animals are typically deemed worthy of protection since they are gendered masculine, whereas domestic animals, typically gendered feminine, are seen as valid subjects of human exploitation. See Adams and Donovan, *Animals & Women*, 6.
suburban locations and by appealing to the rhetoric of health, hygiene, and efficiency in order to cleanse processes of meat production. Despite the increasing abstraction of meat from its animal origins, however, some of the cultural values associated with consuming animal flesh remained remarkably constant over time. Meat eating functioned as a signifier of one’s privileged socioeconomic and ‘civilized’ status, an identity with patriarchal and racial connotations, and symbolized human mastery of nature and exploitation of nonhuman beings, defining in part the meaning of human subjectivity in a time of profound social and cultural change.
Figure 1. Interior of Duggan & Gau Butcher Shop, Camrose Alberta. Glenbow Archives NA-3462-24. c. 1913.
Figure 2. Interior of a Meat Market, Lacombe, Alberta. Glenbow Archives. ND-2-132. Date unknown.
Figure 3. Pat Burns Meat Market, Calgary Alberta, 1910s. Glenbow Archives. NA-1469-18. c. 1910.
Conclusion: The Dead Animal Returns

Killing animals in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada was an important part of humans’ definitions of self and nation. Animal death was a crucial component of Canada’s colonial project, a literal necessity for the development of agriculture and the expansion of settlement, and an ideological imperative for the nation-building and empire-building rhetoric of mastery over the landscape. As such, killing animals signified the ability to overcome the obstacles of settlement in a colonial space. People had to kill animals; their sense of self, place, nation, and empire depended in part upon killing the beast. Animal death was imperative to claims of legitimacy as a settler colony, symbolizing the ability to subdue the wild landscape contained within the dominion’s borders. At a time when Darwinian theories of natural selection were altering contemporary understandings of human-animal kinship, when industrial growth was becoming increasingly pervasive and entangled with animal exploitation, and when the urbanization and modernization of Canada was distancing many men and women from wildlife, killing animals provided a means through which English Canadians defined themselves and their nation’s place in the world. The ways in which contemporaries thought about, enacted, represented, and consumed the bodies of animals functioned as a kind of self-fashioning through which men and women positioned themselves as modern subjects within a technologically and scientifically advanced nation, an emerging empire to itself.
But although animal death was desired as a prerequisite to colonial expansion, the decline of wild animal populations amidst the spread of agriculture and settlement came to be regretted as a negative consequence of urban-industrial modernity. No longer dependent upon wild animals for subsistence, people attributed new cultural and political value to the creatures as emblems of sport and leisure, characterizing the ability to kill animals and the possession of wild animal bodies as signifiers of exclusivity and social power. Killing wildlife became an activity of leisure instead of one of subsistence, and an elite group of sportsmen desired to restrict access to hunting, claiming that their own culture of killing stemmed from a benevolent love for animals and constituted an effort to protect animals. Reflecting an antimodernist sense of guilt over human culpability in processes of animal extinction, then, contemporary observers appealed to class, race, gender, and species privilege as a means of justifying continued practices of killing animals amidst growing concern over conservationism and preservationism. Rather than accept limitations to their status as virile masters of a colonial landscape or adapt practices of consumption to mitigate the harmful effects of industrialization on animals’ lives, Canadian men and women continued to kill wild animals.

Alongside continued practices of killing animals, then, Canadians devised a host of strategies and tropes to ease lingering feelings of guilt over the extinction of wild animal populations. Nature writers desired to articulate an ethic of sentimental identification with nonhuman beings, while sportsmen cultivated and promoted a distinctive code of behaviour that reframed killing animals as a signifier of elite prerogative, chastising the allegedly unrestrained and uncivilized ways in which market hunters and indigenous hunters killed animals. Photographers’ and taxidermists’ belief
that specters of vanishing animals could be preserved representationally to compensate for the disappearance of material animals from the dominion’s forests exposed a sense of regret at such processes of animal extinction, and their appeals to scientific progress, imperial hegemony, and patriarchal prerogative legitimized their own practices of killing even as they denounced the supposed disregard for animal life held by the majority of the population, particularly those fickle women with their bird hats. The mass killing of wildlife was supplanted by the mass killing of domesticated animals, particularly within Canada’s growing meatpacking industry. Eating commercially produced meat symbolized settlers’ liberation from the seasonal constraints of their environment and their lessened reliance on indigenous hunters and trappers for subsistence. Meat producers and consumers devised a variety of strategies that obscured the animal origins of meat, removing graphic processes of slaughter and disassembly from public visibility and emphasizing health, hygiene, and convenience.

Humans desired more authentic encounters with wild animals, but were not willing to stop killing them; as animals became increasingly scarce, valued more for their symbolic value than for their subsistence value, such encounters became less material and more representational, mediated by the imperatives of consumer capitalism. Contemporary men and women constructed the ability to kill and preserve animals as a means of maintaining the social hierarchies threatened by modernity’s dislocations, translating wildlife from material beings to symbolic objects. They continued to boast of their mastery over animals but did so in ways that increasingly sanitized killing, rendering invisible the more bloody aspects of animal death, constituting themselves as benevolent conquerors of nature. Dead animals adopted potent symbolism as trophies, as
specimens, and as food, bolstering claims to imperial, racial, patriarchal, class, and species privilege. Such appeals to science, empire, and civilization naturalized animal death at the hands of humans, allowing Canada’s national and colonial project to continue despite awareness of animal extinction, ensuring that proper hierarchies between human and animal and between various groups of humans remained intact.

Killing animals in the short story, in the wilderness, in the photographic and taxidermic studio, and in the slaughterhouse differed in form and in meaning, yet such acts also embodied common themes. Jonathan Burt has compared practices of killing animals within communities of sport hunters and in modern abattoirs, arguing that while hunters seek to increase the difficulty of killing and foster unpredictability and uncertainty, meat producers desire to render animal death more efficient, standardized, and predictable.¹ Yet despite these important distinctions, the moment of animal death in the modern abattoir and in the wilderness shared similar meanings. In each case, killing nonhuman beings helped to constitute Canada as a legitimate nation and as an emerging empire, symbolizing its ability to conquer the wild spaces and creatures contained within its borders. Killing wild animals allowed settlers to make space for agricultural settlement and industrial development, while killing domesticated animals enabled contemporaries to boast of their liberation from dependence on wild game for subsistence.

Killing both wild and domestic animals also signified the superiority of human over animal and the right of humans to consume nonhuman others for pleasure and profit. Hunters’ appeals to the sportsmen’s code as a way of reframing human violence against animal as legitimate practice, similar to meat producers’ and consumers’ use of the

rhetoric of modernity and civilization, moreover, with its patriarchal and imperial connotations, constituted common rhetorical strategies by which humans distanced themselves from acts of violence while continuing to perpetuate animal death. In each case, strategies of legitimization obscured but did not eliminate actual death, instead altering popular acceptance of death in ways that entrenched normalized conceptions of human superiority and produced English Canadians as modern, consuming subjects within a colonial nation.

Killing animals has again become popular in recent years. Images of dead and disassembled animals appear everywhere today, from the walls of postmodernist art galleries and restaurants, to the pages of books and magazines, to the screens of cinema and television; taxidermy, fur wearing, and meat eating have become immensely popular ways of decorating one’s home and body and of signifying one’s sense of taste. I would argue that there are several explanations for this morbid, graphic fascination with animals that parallel, to some extent, the reasons why men and women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were similarly captivated with dead animals. In Victorian Canada as well as in contemporary Canada, humans have been faced with stark evidence of the detrimental consequences of human interventions into nature, particularly in regards to processes of animal extinction. Turn-of-the-century women and men began to recognize the effects of urban-industrial capitalism upon natural environments and animal populations, which fostered early practices of conservation and preservation. Although environmentalism has waxed and waned over the years, recent advances in understanding the impact of global warming, population growth, and natural resource exploitation upon the flora and the fauna of the earth has rendered issues of animal extinction important
subjects of public debate. Yet then, as now, rather than accept challenges to human mastery over the natural world or admit human culpability in processes of animal depopulation, humans have opted to fetishize the commodification of animals. Unwilling to relinquish human dominance or accept environmental limitations to practices of consumer capitalism, we have reframed violence against animals as hip, haute, avant-garde.

And so too do the contradictory ways in which humans conceptualize relations with nonhuman beings continue. Individual acts of cruelty against animals are chastised as abhorrent, inhumane examples of behaviour no longer tolerated in our supposedly compassionate society, while at the same time the institutional exploitation and killing of vast quantities of animals continues unproblematically and largely unchallenged, on ever-growing scales, fuelling the engines of urban-industrial capitalism. Critics of puppy mills, seal hunts, or other examples of animal cruelty favoured by the media waste no time denouncing the perpetrators of such violence while leaving their own habits of meat eating or leather wearing unquestioned. Puppies and baby seals are cute; hogs and chickens less so. Amidst the deeply contradictory ways in which humans ascribe cultural value to animals, then, and within the paradoxical logic of capitalism, arbitrary factors continue to constitute justification for opposing the killing of one kind of being while sanctioning the mass slaughter of another, indicating how humans continue to constitute animals at the same time as they are constituted by animals.

Amidst these tangled webs of human-animal encounters, with all their varied meanings and ironies, scholars have sought to use postmodern theorizations on animal fragmentation in order to challenge human mastery, suggesting that a rethinking of the question of the animal is indeed possible, that a reconceptualization of what it means to be human, framed alongside more empathetic alliance with animals, is necessary in order to transcend the exclusionary implications of conventional humanism. Adrian Franklin has differentiated human-animal relations under the conditions of postmodernity from those of modernity by pointing to the fragmentation of the subject, which, he suggests, has challenged the hegemony of anthropocentrism and has enabled more empathetic ways of relating with animals to prevail.\(^3\) Donna Haraway has pointed to the various ways in which humans have used the guise of science as a means of naturalizing exclusionary categories of difference and has argued that an emphasis on affinity rather than identity might allow humans to work toward greater equality, with one another and with nonhuman beings. Whereas constructs of identity, Haraway writes, fail to acknowledge otherness and thus facilitate essentialist theories of humanism, notions of affinity encourage humans to seek kinship with others—with animals, monsters, cyborgs, and other beings that are “multiply heterogeneous, inhomogeneous, accountable, and connected.”\(^4\) Haraway positions these hybrid creatures as means of denaturalizing the normalized constructions of difference between sexes, races, and species that are entrenched within the classificatory practices of conventional biological science.

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\(^3\) Adrian Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures: A Sociology of Human-Animal Relations in Modernity* (London: Sage, 1999): 188-189. Franklin argues that human-animal relations during modernity were characterized by humans’ efforts to treat animals as specimens, as objects of knowledge to be known, dominated, and mastered, that anthropocentric notions of human superiority prevailed.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have also proposed a philosophical framework for conceptualizing a form of human-animal affinity less violent and exclusionary than conventional modernist characterizations of bounded subjecthood that are shaped by the conventions of patrilineal thought. Characterizing such processes of affinity as becoming-animal, the entering into alliance with particular, anomalous animals, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this state of becoming functions as a way of moving beyond hegemonic traditions of descent and filiation, which have perpetuated inequalities between various groups of humans and between the species, and encourages us to use multiplicity rather than individuality as a means of conceptualizing existence.\(^5\)

In a variety of lectures and publications, Jacques Derrida has also sought to suggest ways of overcoming conventional, essentialist notions of humans and animals, pointing to the ways in which traditional Western philosophy has failed to deconstruct the category of the animal, and desiring to restore animals the ability to gaze back at humans. “The experience of the seeing animal, of the animal that looks at them, has not been taken into account in the philosophical or theoretical architecture of their discourse,” the philosopher writes in regards to the unsuccessful efforts of Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, Lacan, and Levinas to grapple with questions of animality, “it is as if the men representing this configuration had seen without being seen, seen the animal without being seen by it, without being seen seen by it.”\(^6\) In criticizing philosophers’ conventional denial of speech to animals, Derrida does not suggest simply “giving speech back to the

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animal” but rather “a radical reinterpretation of what is living,” a deconstruction of humans as well as of animals to eliminate all forms of essentialism and to recognize animal individuality.\(^7\)

Finally, in her analysis of the biopolitical underpinnings of the species hierarchy, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, Nicole Shukin argues that an analysis of both the material and the symbolic existence of animals within structures of consumer capitalism is necessary to grasp truly the scale of industrial exploitation of nonhuman beings. “The capacity of animal life to be taken both literally and figuratively, as a material and symbolic resource of the nation,” Shukin writes, “constitutes its fetishistic potency…the ambivalence of animal signs is for this reason a pivotal means of depoliticizing volatile contradictions between species and speculative currencies of capital and between capitalism’s material and symbolic modes of production.”\(^8\) The author argues that although graphic images of dead animals in contemporary popular culture hold the potential to expose the violence lurking behind such processes of commodification, the ideological function of such symbols in fact normalizes violence. As a means of denaturalizing these processes, Shukin suggests that analyses of animals must seek to examine not simply the symbolic or affective dimensions of animals as signs

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\(^7\) *Ibid.*, 160. Derrida’s critique is also decidedly Foucauldian in nature; as he notes of the biopolitical nature of animal exploitation, “[i]t is all too evident that in the course of the last two centuries these traditional forms of treatment of the animal have been turned upside down by the joint developments of zoological, ethological, biological, and genetic forms of knowledge, which remain inseparable from techniques of intervention into their object, from the transformation of the actual object, and from the milieu and world of their object, namely, the living animal. this has occurred by means of farming and regimentalization at a demographic level unknown in the past, by means of genetic experimentation, the industrialization of what can be called the production for consumption of animal meat, artificial insemination on a massive scale, more and more audacious manipulations of the genome, the reduction of the animal not only to production and overactive reproduction (hormones, genetic crossbreeding, cloning, etc.), of meat for consumption, but also of all sorts of other end products, and all of that in the service of a certain being a nd the putative well-being of man…” 25.

but must also uncover the material and physical practices of exploitation, making explicit the rhetorical and practical means through which speciesism continues.⁹

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have argued that historical practices of killing animals were integral to the evolution of Canada as nation and as empire and were crucial to the definition of Canadians as modern subjects in the post-Confederation, post-Darwinian world. Initially reliant upon wild animals such as moose and bear for subsistence, turn-of-the-century Canadian men and women responded to knowledge of declining animal populations by restricting the ability to kill animals to a select few. Wild animals were increasingly valued for their recreational value and for their cultural and political symbolism as emblems of wealth and power. The ability to kill wild animals, then, and the power to display the photographically and taxidermically preserved bodies of such creatures, defined oneself as masterful colonizer. At the same time, rhetorical appeals to scientific pursuit, empathetic identification with animal, and antimodernist notions of individual, national, and racial rejuvenation, obscured the visible, violent aspects of animal death and positioned killing as a benevolent act, thus naturalizing processes of patriarchy and imperialism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada.

The multiple, contradictory, and deeply ironic ways in which late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Canadians imagined, enacted, represented, and consumed animal death, both in the material act of killing and in the cultural practice of assigning particular meanings to dead animals, indicates the capacity of the animal to signify different meanings across time and space, defying any essentialist attempts to

ascribe animals consistent, stable, or fixed referents.\textsuperscript{10} Academic efforts to theorize new ways of conceptualizing human-animal affinity alongside the recent resurgence of animal death in popular culture exemplifies animals’ enduring capacity to constitute human perceptions of self and place in myriad ways. How the co-constitution of human and animal will continue in the twenty-first century remains to be seen.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 15.
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