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Aller au sommaire du numéro

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Simile, Metaphor, and the Making and Perception of Canada

D.M.R. Bentley

For Amit Chakma, without whose invitation this essay would not have been written.[1]

I

Aristotle says in different places that a "well-constructed" simile "give[s] an effect of smartness," but a "good metaphor" is "a sign of genius" because it "implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilarities" (*"Art" of Rhetoric* 397; *Art of Poetry* 75). Since Confederation numerous writers have sought with varying degrees of seriousness and success to achieve "an effect of smartness" or to lay claim to "genius" by subjecting Canada and the Canadian identity to the two major tropes of comparison described by Aristotle. One of the most enduring results — the likening of Canadian society to a "mosaic" — appears to have emerged in the early 1920s as a counterpoint to the notion of the United States as a "melting pot" and in recognition of Canada's burgeoning ethnic diversity.[2] By the 1930s, it had furnished the title of two books — Kate A. Foster's *Our Canadian Mosaic* (1926) and John Murray Gibson's *Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* (1938) — and in 1965 it was given new life in *The Vertical Mosaic*, John Porter's influential study of "Social Class and Power in Canada." That "mosaic" served long and often enough as a trope for Canadian society that it became a cliché testifies to the aptness if not the brilliance or "genius" of its identification of "similarity in dissimilarities," a quality that has also spawned similar comparisons such as Canada as "like a tossed salad" (Arnold Edinburgh) and as "a great sand pile . . . needing cement to bind" its myriad "grains" (Nellie McClung). The focus of this essay is principally on two tropes of the pre-Confederation period that may well have helped to "bind" Canada together, but before turning to them, some theoretical and historical background is in order.

A succinct and useful summary of the current state of research on metaphor and, by extension, simile can be found in the preamble to "Metaphor Creates Intimacy and Temporarily Enhances Theory of Mind" by Andrea Bowes and Albert Katz:

> Most of the . . . explanations [of why people speak metaphorically when literal language might have been used] involve communicative or cognitive goals, such as providing a compact and efficient way to state a complex message; enhancing the vividness of the message; and serving to illuminate, clarify, or explain a concept that is not easily understood with literal language. . . . Other cognitive roles for metaphor have also been suggested, such as being especially persuasive . . . or in creating a stronger memory trace. . . . (953)

All of these explanations are valuable in the present context, as is the overall thrust of Bowes's and Katz's thesis that the use of metaphor plays a role in "creating social bonds and in understanding other's [sic] intentions," a hypothesis that they base on the research that has flowed from Ted Cohen's contention in "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy" that '"[t]here is a unique way in which the maker and the appreciator of a metaphor are drawn closer to one another"' and, thus, into a state of '"intimacy"' generated, in part, by "cognitive effort" to understand a metaphor and to arrive at a theory of its user's mind (ideas, beliefs) (953-54). *Prima facie*, it would appear that metaphors and similes are equipped with affective and rhetorically powerful qualities that would be of considerable assistance in the work of envisaging, creating, and consolidating a nation.

As is partly the case with "mosaic" and "tossed salad," many of the metaphors and similes that have been applied to Canada turn on the country's relationship with Britain and, especially, its distinctness from the United States. Not long after Confederation, the American Secretary of State James G. Blaine likened the country to "an apple on a tree just beyond reach" that "in due time . . . will fall into our hands," and in the midst of the Second World War, Winston Churchill described it as "the linchpin of the English-speaking world" that by virtue of its relationships with the United States and Britain would "prevent any growth of division between the . . . nations of Europe and the countries . . . [of] the New World." A short time later another Englishman, the poet Patrick Anderson, described Canada as "America's attic, an empty

room, / a something possible, a chance, a dance / that is not danced," and more recently the late American comedian Robin Williams joked that Canada is "like a loft apartment over a really great party" and "like a really nice apartment over a meth lab" (Diels). Besides being notable for their shift in valance — the first denigrates Canada and the second the United States — they both exhibit the tension between similarity (likeness) and dissimilarity (unlikeness) that is to a greater or lesser extent characteristic of all similes because they are assertions of similarity that assume a degree of dissimilarity. One effect of this is to initiate a search for the basis of the comparison, an inductive procedure that involves emotion as well as thought, the result being, in the case of a "loft apartment over a really great party," the recognition that Canada is a comparatively dull place and, in the case of a "really nice apartment over a meth lab," the recognition that Canada is (perhaps excessively) "nice" and that its neighbour to the south is pretty "nasty" (drug-fuelled, dangerous, exploitative). When aggregated, the tropes to which Canada has been subjected by the writers just quoted and by many others resemble passages in the poetry of P.B. Shelley, where entities such as Emilia in *Epipsychidion* (ll. 27-34)[3] are subjected to a series of comparisons in a vain attempt to capture and convey their essence.

While metaphors are closely enough akin to similes to be regarded as their stronger siblings, they also differ in one important respect: rather than comparing their two elements by means of "like" or "as," they identify one element with the other, as in Romeo's "Juliet is the sun" (as opposed to his Juliet "hangs upon the cheek of night / Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear") (2.2.2; 1.5.47-48). As indicated by its derivation from the Greek μεταθορα — from metaphérō (meta: across + phérō: carry), hence carry across — metaphor involves a "transference" or, in Aristotle's words again, "giving . . . [a] thing a name that belongs to something else" and thus creating an "admixture" (*Art of Poetry* 71-72, 75). To describe this procedure George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and other cognitive linguists use the term "cross-domain mapping," which is to say the application of a term/concept from one domain ("the sun") to a term/concept in a target domain ("Juliet"). Viewed through the lens of these definitions, the transferences and cross-domain mapping of the colonizing process in Canada and elsewhere was metaphorical, and the term and concept "British North America" the foundational pre-Confederation metaphor.

In few places are the transferences and cross-domain mappings that produced British North America more glaringly apparent than in what is now southwestern Ontario. Beginning in the early 1790s with the naming of the districts, towns, and physical features of Upper Canada roughly in accordance with a map of England and Scotland laid sideways along the north shore of Lake Erie, the Britishing of the region proceeded with astonishing rapidity. On 16 August 1792, the river that the Native peoples had called Askunesippi and the French had dubbed La Tranchée (subsequently La Tranche) became the Thames, and a few months later the settlement at its forks that John Graves Simcoe envisaged as the future capital of the province became New London, and, in time, London. Once put in place (the operative phrase), the potential of the Britishing process was released with a proliferating energy derived from a powerful mixture of immigrant nostalgia and a desire among the majority of Upper Canadian settlers and administrators to create a society that was recognizably, appealingly, and loyally British. As Edward Gibbon Wakefield would put it in his enormously influential essay on "The Art of Colonization" (1834), the new settlement was "not [a] new societ[y], but [an] old societ[y] in [a] new place" (329).[4] In 1800, the act establishing the London District named the area around the proposed capital Middlesex County, and by the 1830s the adjacent bank of the Thames was the site of the township of Westminster. "Crossing 'Westminster Bridge,' a little way on the left," wrote a visitor in 1839, "we overlook . . . the wonderfully prosperous Canadian town of London, so very recently sprung from the solitudes" (Brown 282). By 1845, London also boasted bridges "dignified with the names Blackfriars . . . and Wellington" (Alexander 1: 139), and in due course it would have its Covent Garden Market, Oxford Street, Highbury Avenue, and Mayfair Drive (the transferred names could almost fill a phone book, and, in fact, do). If, as Lakoff and Johnson claim in *Metaphors We Live By*, "understanding one thing in terms of another" is "the essence of metaphor" (5), then London and other nominatively similar cities are metaphor's Canadian geographical quintessences.[5]

In *Conceptual Projection and Middle Spaces* and subsequent essays, Gilles Fauconnier, Mark Turner, and their colleagues discuss the creation of metaphor as a process of "conceptual integration" or "blending," whereby material from a source and target combine to produce a

conceptual structure that contains aspects of both while also possessing an "emergent structure" or "content" of its own. During the early nineteenth century, Upper Canada was just such an "emergent structure," produced to an inconsiderate extent by an activity closely related to the creation of a metaphor: the mapping of a source domain (Britain) conceived as highly ordered and attractive onto a target domain (Canada) conceived as less so but as having the potential to be transformed both conceptually and physically into a semblance of its source, to which it bore increasing resemblance agriculturally, architecturally, and constitutionally, as well as in other, less obvious ways. Patrick Shirreff's remark in 1835 that the "letters [of the word] Thames are invariably pronounced soft by the inhabitants of the country" around London (194) is but one indication of the fact that the "emergent structure" under construction in Upper Canada/Canada West was both like and unlike its source domain: it was neither Britain nor Canada, but both of them and other than them — an amalgam in a specific place and, as such, unique. When Henry Scadding observes in *Toronto of Old* (1873) that "Canadian society in all its strata has been more or less leavened from England" (144), his metaphor is entirely apt — both in its narrow sense of a ferment that makes dough rise and in its broader senses of "permeat[ed] with a transforming influence" and "mingl[ed] or imbu[ed] with some . . . modifying element" (*OED*).

II

"[T]he whole secret of social figurations," writes Norbert Elias in *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* of his theory of the processes by which societies and civilizations develop, lies in "how, from the interweaving of countless individual interests and intentions — whether tending in the same direction or in divergent and hostile directions — something comes into being that was planned and intended by none of these individuals, yet has emerged nevertheless from their intentions and actions" (312).[6] Numerous pre-Confederation works of poetry, fiction, and non-fictional prose provide glimpses of the process of "social figuration" ("sociogenesis and . . . relational dynamics" [312]) at work, few more strikingly and influentially than *Bogle Corbet, or; the Emigrants* (1831), the second of two semi-autobiographical novels about the founding of settlements by John Galt, himself the founder

of Guelph, which he named, of course, after the family name of the Hanoverians. Faced with assertion by a group of disgruntled immigrants that, rather than establish in a village, "every man [should] work . . . for himself on his own farm" "as [is] the practice of the country," the eponymous protagonist of the novel evokes Aesop's fable of the bundle of sticks in order to stress the value of communal cohesiveness. "'Many of you must have heard the story of the old man and the bundle of sticks," he says — "apply it to your own case'":

> "If you separate in the wilderness, you will soon find yourselves as weak as each of the seven sticks when the bundle was loosened — but if you adhere to each other, your united strength will effect far more with less effort than your utmost separate endeavours. In sickness, and in accident, you will have friends and helpmates at hand. . . . If an ague falls among you, what is to be done to provide the needful shelter for the sick? whereas, if you continue together, your united exertions will serve in a short time for the construction of an asylum for all, and your toil will be enlivened by society." (3:31-33)

Corbet's metaphor and speech are successful in averting mutiny largely because he is able to convince the women of the group that, if they remain in the community, it will be his "duty" to provide for them, but if they opt to "do nothing for the common good," they will be left to their "own devices" (3:35). As a result, the founding of the village proceeds apace, beginning with "the construction of a temporary house, in which all the emigrants . . . [can] be accommodated, until proper dwellings . . . [are] created for themselves" (3:37-39), a program based on Galt's experience at Guelph, where the settlers were initially housed in a large building known as The Priory. With their strong emphasis on the "common good" and mutual assistance — their collective morality — Corbet's remarks to the mutinous emigrants and their wives could be classified as socialistic if it were not for a paternalistic emphasis on "duty" that is suggestive of feudalism and evocative of the Romantic feudalism of William Cobbett and Thomas Carlyle, but without the nostalgia for a religious golden age that characterizes the former's *A History of the Protestant Reformation* and the latter's *Past and Present*.

Thirty years after the publication of *Bogle Corbet* and six years before Confederation, Galt's fellow countryman Alexander McLachlan drew heavily on the novel in *The Emigrant* (1861) to recount in poetic form

the trials and tribulations of a similar group of Scottish settlers. Whereas in Galt's novel the political implications of the bundle of sticks are largely dormant, that is far from the case in McLachlan's long poem, especially when the trope comes at the climax of a heated debate among the settlers about the future of their village and, by clear implication, their new homeland. The occasion of the debate is the felling of the first tree at the site, an event given the status of a ceremony by Galt at the founding of the village in *Bogle Corbet* and his earlier emigrant novel, *Lawrie Todd, or; the Settlers in the Woods* (1830). "'Twas a kind of sacrament," says McLachlan's narrator of the felling of the first tree, "Like to laying the foundation, / Of a city or a nation" (4:35-36). "[S]turdy giant" though it is, the tree eventually falls like a sylvan Goliath to a collective David, prompting a "cheer . . . as when a foe / Or a tyrant is laid low" (4:37, 83-84) — an overt indication of the allegorical aspect of what is occurring.

During and following the felling of the tree, three of the settlers deliver speeches that reflect different positions or, more broadly (and in Mary Douglas's phrase) "thought-styles." The first of these, which is delivered in "doleful accents" by a speaker seated on a symbolically "rotten log," is fatalistic or "isolate" (Douglas 84) and thus of little use to a pioneer culture, as becomes abundantly apparent when, immediately after its concluding assertion that "we'll never fell that tree!" the tree comes crashing to the ground (McLachlan 4:41-80). The second speech, delivered appropriately from the "stump" of the fallen tree, is a rousing paean to "'honest manly toil'" that recalls Adam Smith in its emphasis on individual effort as the key to individual and communal "'Health and wealth and happiness'" (4:89-152). But of particular interest in the present context is the third speech, for it is there that the fable of the bundle of sticks is pressed into service as a metaphor for the society that the settlers should attempt to create in Canada and made the vehicle for a social vision — even an incipient Canadian nationalism — based on collective morality. As a contrast to the selfish "hunting after power and pelf" that, with Carlyle, he sees as the root of all contemporary evil, the third speaker conjures up a commonwealth of "long ago" that owes much to Gonzalo's utopian vision of Prospero's island in the second act of *The Tempest* (2.1.146-70) and then provides his own vision of the future based on it:

> "I can see no reason why
> We might not unite and try
> Like those simple men of old,
> To redeem the world from gold;
> Each for all, and all for each,
> Is the doctrine that I preach;
> Mind the fable of the wands,
> 'Tis a fact that always stands.
> Singly, we are poor and weak
> But united, who can break." (4:159-224)

Almost needless to say, the phrasing as well as the "doctrine" of the speech raises echoes in Marx and other socialists (as well as in the motto of Dumas's three musketeers), all of which add resonance to its main point: the society that the settlers should strive to create in Canada must be communitarian if it is to be ethical and to endure. The idyllic log cabin near the shore of Lake Ontario that is described in the next section of the poem is the first stage in the creation of such a society — a large bundle of sticks bound together for human shelter and protection.

Between the publication of *Bogle Corbet* and *The Emigrant* the bundle of sticks made its most influential appearance as a metaphor for Canada in Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *Nature and Human Nature* (1855) and from there in Alexander Morris's *Nova Britannia; or the Consolidation of the British North American Provinces into the Dominion of Canada,* a lecture delivered in Montreal in 1858 and subsequently printed and widely circulated as a pamphlet. In *Nature and Human Nature*, Haliburton uses Sam Slick to present Britain with three alternatives for its remaining "North American colonies: First: Incorporation with England, and representation in Parliament. Secondly: Independence. Thirdly: Annexation with the [United] States" (2: 211). Of course, Haliburton's Tory solution to the dilemma is unequivocal: Canada West, Canada East, and the Maritimes should be unified and represented in the British Parliament. "Here are *the bundle of sticks*," concludes Slick, "all they need is to be well united" (2:230). The chapter in which these remarks occur is entitled "The Bundle of Sticks."[7]

In *Nova Britannia*, Morris does not just quote Haliburton's remarks on Britain's three options for her remaining "'North American

Colonies'"; he uses Slick's metaphor of the '"bundle of sticks'" needing only "'to be well united'" and his preceding celebration of the country as an enormous "'empire'" rich in natural resources and "'peopled by such a race as no other country under heaven can produce'" to set the inspirational tone of the lecture's concluding paragraphs (41, 47). More than this, in "Speech at Perth, on 1st July, 1867," he returns to the metaphor to summarize the process leading up to Confederation:

> Statesmen saw, in the British American colonies, the bundle of sticks in the old fable, and that all they wanted was to be well united. Singly, each was weak and feeble — the hand of the child could break it. United, the power of the strong man in his vigour could be defied. (127)

Later in the same speech, Morris returns to the metaphor yet again, this time quoting Haliburton verbatim as he had in the "Conclusion" of his *Nova Britannia* speech of more than a decade earlier, adding that now the bundle of sticks is "[u]nited . . . it is our duty to see that the alliance is made firm and secure, and indissoluble" (129). It is more than likely that the "strong man in his vigour" that "could be defied" by the "bundle of sticks" is a reference to the United States.

Whether or not the metaphor captured the imagination of Morris's listeners and readers as it so obviously did his own cannot be known, but there can be no doubt that he and his *Nova Britannia* lecture and pamphlet played an important role in the achievement of Confederation. "There is a little book to which I must refer," said Thomas D'Arcy McGee when he rose to speak on the subject of Confederation in the Legislative Assembly on 9 February 1865; "[i]t is a pamphlet, which met with an extraordinary degree of success, entitled *Nova Britannia* by my hon. friend . . . [Alexander Morris, who] has been one of the principal agents in bringing into existence the present Government, which is now carrying out the idea embodied in his book . . . which I hope will be replicated among the political miscellanies of the provinces when we are one people" (*Speeches* 266). It is possible that Sir Narcisse-Fortunat Belleau had in mind Morris's stirring repetition of Haliburton's metaphor when, five days later in the Confederation debates, he was "reminded of the fable of the bundle of sticks . . . which so aptly applies to the present circumstances": "separated we are weak, united we shall be strong" (*Parliamentary Debates* 181). It is even pos-

sible that McLachlan knew of Morris's and/or Haliburton's metaphor when he gave it to the climactic speaker in *The Emigrant.* But the surest and most telling testament to the metaphor's importance comes over twenty years after Confederation and from the genteel pen of the annexationist Goldwin Smith: "though a bundle of sticks, as Federationists said, became stronger by union," he wrote in 1891 in *Canada and the Canadian Question*, "the saying might not hold good with regard to a number of fishing-rods tied together at the ends" (192). In other words and as he proceeds to explain, when Confederation was conceived "Canada was comparatively compact," but with the extension of "[t]he Dominion to the Pacific rim" (192-93), the country had become a long, fragile, and militarily vulnerable string of provinces.

III

Admire and praise as he did Morris's *Nova Britannia*, Thomas D'Arcy McGee does not appear to have used the metaphor of the bundle of sticks in his own efforts to promote and celebrate Confederation.[8] Perhaps he felt that the trope was too banal and folksy or that by the time he entered the Confederation debates early in 1860 it had already become a cliché. In any case, when he moved from the United States to Montreal in 1857, McGee came equipped with a trope that he had recently used in the *American Celt* to describe his native Ireland when seen from above and abroad: a "shell-shaped Island . . . round which roll the subject waves, like the old ocean around the shield of Achilles" in the *Iliad* (qtd. in Wilson 2: 99). Just as Morris and, before him, Haliburton had turned to metaphor at the conclusion of their arguments, so too did McGee in the visionary and stirring climax of a speech on Confederation in the Legislative Assembly on 2 May 1860:

> I look to the future of my adopted country with hope, though not without anxiety; I see in the not remote distance, one great nationality bound, like the shield of Achilles, by the blue rim of ocean — I see it quartered into many communities — each disposing of its internal affairs — but all bound together by free institutions, free intercourse, and free commerce; I see within the round of that shield, the peaks of the Western mountains and the crests of the Eastern waves — the winding Assinaboine, the five-fold lakes, the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa, the Saguenay, the St. John, and the Basin

> of Minas — by all these flowing waters, in all the valleys they fertilise, in all the cities they visit in their courses, I see a generation of industrious, contented, moral men, free in name and in fact, — men capable of maintaining, in peace and in war, a Constitution worthy of such a country. (*Speeches* 175-76)

"These words have echoed through Canadian history as the most eloquent expression of British North American nationalism ever made," observes David A. Wilson in his recent and magisterial biography of McGee; "they have been reprinted in school textbooks, quoted in biographies, speeches, and anthologies, and reproduced in TV and radio documentaries" (2:100). During the Centennial period, the incandescent trope of "the shield of Achilles" furnished the title of a collection of essays edited by W.L. Morton; in 2007 it provided the title and epigraph of a chapter in Richard Gwyn's biography of Sir John A. Macdonald; and in October 2013 it was quoted in the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the second session of the forty-first Parliament of Canada, briefly burnishing the dull proceedings with historical and metaphorical resonance and glamour. It has become, in the words of the historian Jonathan Vance, part of the "national ceremonial."

Before examining McGee's trope and speech in some detail, the "shield of Achilles" itself needs to be situated in its Homeric context. Constructed for Homer's operatic hero by Hephaestus (Vulcan), the Greek god of fire and the arts, the shield is described at length in nearly two hundred lines of Book 18 of the *Iliad* (537-704) that have occasioned an enormous amount of commentary, including the famous appendix entitled "Observations on the Shield of Achilles" by Alexander Pope in his translation of the *Iliad*, which may well have contributed to McGee's understanding of the significance of the "Rich, Various Artifice emblaz'd" by Hephaestus within the "threefold circle" of the "utmost verge" that "bound[s]" its "massy round" (Pope 18: 552-54). To Pope, Homer's "Intention was no less, than to draw the whole world in the compass of th[e] shield":

> We see first the Universe in general; the Heavens . . . the Stars . . . the Earth . . . the Seas . . . pour'd round. We next see the World in a nearer and more particular view; the Cities . . . the Labours of the Country . . . the Fruit of those Labours . . . Pastoral Life . . . In a word, all the Occupations, all the Ambitions, and all the Diversions of Mankind. (7:358)

After summarizing existing commentaries on the shield, Pope provides commentaries of his own on its "Boss," twelve "Compartiment[s]," and "Border," which "represent[s] the rapid course of the ocean . . . roll[ing] its waves round the Extremity of the whole Circumference" (370). That the parallel drawn by McGee between the shield and the emergent Canada turns, like his earlier comparison between the shield and Ireland, on them both being "bound" by the ocean suggests that it was this, with its strong implication of unity within a natural border, that most recommended the metaphor to him. Be this as it may, the comparison between Canada and Achaea that comes with the metaphor and its context bestows an epic glow on the country-to-be that remains dazzling, indeed, fulsomely so.

In Homer's description of the shield of Achilles, as in McGee's speech, two rhetorical devices are in operation: *ekphrasis* (a description of a work of art or other object) and *chorographia* (a description of a country or a nation). (In fact, Homer's description is a *locus classicus* of both, as in the Canadian context is McGee's). Master orator and rhetorician that he was, McGee understood the power of *ekphrasis* and *chorographia* to conjure up vivid and potentially affective images in the mind's eye of a listener or a reader. To that end, he adopts a rapidly moving bird's eye perspective, taking his audience first from west to east — "I see within the round of that shield the peaks of the Western mountains and the crests of the Eastern waves" — and then on a quick tour of Canada's rivers and lakes that makes highly effective use of the emotive potential of storied and historical place names — "the winding Assinaboine, the five-fold lakes,[9] the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa, the Saguenay, the St. John, and the Basin of Minas," the last of which had been made especially resonant by the publication in 1847 of Longfellow's *Evangeline.* But perhaps the most powerful prompt to visualization in the passage is the four-fold repetition after the initial "I look" of the phrase "I see," which not only encourages the audience to participate in McGee's vision of Canada as an integrated entity, but also gives the passage forward momentum and unity, two qualities that lie at the core of the speech as a whole and, indeed, the core of the Confederation movement.

Nor are repeated verbs of sight or vision the only components of the passage that reflect and reinforce its core qualities. Grammatically, the entire passage consists of multiple clauses contained in a single per-

iodic sentence that concludes with the idea towards which the speech as a whole is directed: "a Constitution worthy of such a country." In miniature, the movement towards the alliteration of "Constitution" and "country" in this climactic statement is anticipated early in the passage by the shift in meaning of the word "bound." At first, "bound" is used with reference to a physical boundary and constraint ("the blue rim of ocean"), but later, after the heraldic image of a "quartered" shield has acknowledged Canada's diversity ("many communities — each disposing of its internal affairs"), it is used with reference to aspects of the nation that would ensure that its potentially dissonant components are unified — "bound together by free institutions, free intercourse, and free commerce." As this last statement indicates, McGee well knew the rhetorical power of triplets consisting of parallel words and phrases, a device to which he returns a little later and with a climactic use of the word "free" to herald the imminent triumph of unity over diversity in "one great nationality" under a "worthy" constitution: "by *all* these flowing waters, in *all* the valleys they fertilize, in *all* the cities they visit in their courses, I see a generation of industrious, contented, and moral men, free in name and in fact. . . ." In the short-term, McGee's ideas may have had "little . . . political impact" (Wilson 101), but, given the brilliance of its imagery and rhetoric, his speech could hardly fail to endure in the Canadian imaginary.[10]

For the generation born around the time of the speech, Canada was a reality within which they grew to maturity. For the remainder of the century and well beyond, however, Canada continued to face the three alternatives enumerated by Haliburton through Sam Slick and reiterated by Morris in *Nova Britannia*. Should the young country strengthen its ties with Britain, seek greater independence from the Mother Country, or, as Smith argued, accept the geographically inevitable and seek union with the United States? Complicating the dilemma was a factor to which Smith's metaphor of the "fishing rods" refers: Canada's immense size after the addition of Manitoba in 1870, British Columbia in 1871, and Prince Edward Island in 1873. (Alberta and Saskatchewan did not become provinces until 1905, but with the completion of the Transcontinental Railway in 1885, they were de facto part of Canada.) With the achievement of Confederation, the tropes developed to promote it had done their work, so something new was needed for the first generations of Canadians.

Apparently, the earliest writer to fuse Canada's youth and immensity into a trope was the influential American man of letters William Dean Howells, who has the male protagonist in his 1871 novel *Their Wedding Journey* describe Canada as "the hulking young giant beyond [the] St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes" with the "very silly attitude . . . of an overgrown womanly boy, clinging to the maternal skirts, and though spoilt and willful, without any character of his own," adding (in the narrator's paraphrase), "Sever the apron-strings of allegiance, and try to be yourself whatever you are" (218-19). Some eight years later in "Dominion Day, 1879" the Kingston poet Agnes Maule Machar depicted Canada as a "young" female "giant [whose] mighty limbs . . . stretch from sea to sea" and "throb . . . [with] conscious life . . . — waking energy" (16). Both of these (and perhaps other) personifications of Canada as a giant of enormous but, as yet, not fully realized potential probably lie in the background of Charles G.D. Roberts's "Canada" (1886), which, to judge by the number of times it was replicated, anthologized, excerpted, and praised in the 1880s and '90s,[11] was one of the best known and most admired Canadian poems of the post-Confederation period.

Although the threat of annexation would soon convince Roberts of the merits of Imperial Federation, when he wrote and first published "Canada" in the mid-1880s he was fervently committed to Canadian Independence from Britain. In fact, at that time he was assembling the Confederation group of poets to assist in the achievement of that goal, a scheme with deep roots in the Young Ireland movement in which McGee, of course, played a prominent role. Not surprisingly, then, the opening stanzas and closing lines of Roberts's poem loudly echo not only the contemptuous description of Canada in *Their Wedding Journey* as a "hulking" and unmanly "young giant" clinging to Britain's maternal skirts, but also the novel's apostrophic urging of the "boy" to "[s]ever the apron-strings":

> O Child of Nations, giant-limbed
> Who stand'st among the nations now
> Unheeded, unadorned, unhymned,
> With unanointed brow,
>
> How long the ignoble sloth, how long
> The trust in greatness not thine own?

Surely the lion's brood is strong
To front the world alone!

How long the indolence, ere thou dare
Achieve thy destiny, seize thy fame, —
Ere our proud eyes behold thee bear
A nation's franchise, a nation's name?

The Saxon force, the Celtic fire,
These are thy manhood's heritage!
Why rest with babes and slaves? Seek higher
The place of race and age.

* * *

Wake, and behold how night is done,
How on thy breast, and o'er thy brow,
Bursts the uprising sun! (85-86)

Between these stanzas and final lines, Roberts surveys the mercantile strength, rich history, and geographical extent of Canada with an emphasis on the heroism of both British and French Canadians and on the ostensible desire of all Canadians — at least all Canadians of European origin — to see their country achieve the full independence from Britain represented metaphorically by "manhood." With Confederation, the tropes inevitably changed but the work of making Canada continued unabated.

It would be a mistake to overestimate the part played in that work by the similes and metaphors discussed here, but there can surely be little doubt that, by giving vivid, affective, and memorable expression to an abstraction, the "bundle of sticks" and the "shield of Achilles" caught the attention of Canadians and helped to open their minds and hearts to the idea of Confederation, as later did Roberts's "Child of Nations" to the idea of Independence. If there is a lesson to be learned from all three of the political tropes examined here it is that, in order to exist, communities and nations need to be envisaged imaginatively, that — to borrow and adapt Benedict Anderson's overused term — "imagined communities" are communities imagined by such people as John Galt and Alexander McLachlan, Thomas Chandler Haliburton and Alexander Morris, Thomas D'Arcy McGee and Charles G.D.

Roberts. But, a final thought and rhetorical question: is Canada not still a metaphorical country — a "bundle of sticks" still waiting to be "well united," a "shield of Achilles" still in the process of being forged?[12]

Notes

[1] A shortened version of this essay was delivered as the Western University President's Lecture in November 2015.

[2] With the exception of the quotations from Robin Williams, which are taken from Kelly Diels's website, all the similes quoted and discussed in the opening paragraphs of this essay are drawn from John Robert Colombo's *Colombo Canadian Quotations* and were accessed through the book's excellent index. For an exhaustive discussion of the mosaic and the melting pot as metaphors for, respectively, Canada and the United States, see Allan Smith's essay.

[3] "Thou Moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form / Among the Dead! / Thou Star above the Storm! / Thou Wonder . . ." and so on (27-34). I am grateful to Tracy Ware for calling my attention to this passage and its purpose many years ago.

[4] Wakefield's ideas were applied to Canada in 1839 in the Durham *Report* but they were operative considerably earlier.

[5] See also Cornwall Bayley's *Canada. A Descriptive Poem, Written at Quebec* (1805), ll. 437-44, where the St. Lawrence is hailed as the "Majestic King of rivers" and features of the Canadian landscape are made analogous to the emblematic objects presented to a monarch at a coronation.

[6] See also *The Civilizing Process* 365-79 for Elias's summary of his arguments and theory.

[7] It is highly likely that Haliburton, like McLachlan, knew Galt's work and it is thus quite likely that he drew the metaphor of the bundle of sticks from *Bogle Corbet*.

[8] Henry J. O'C Clarke, however, asserts that, when McGee was first asked to lecture in Canada (initially at the Young Men's St. Patrick society in Montreal), "he looked at the British Provinces, and remembered the fable of the *Bundle of Sticks*" (28). Since McGee knew McLachlan well enough to secure a position for him as a Canadian emigration agent in Scotland in 1862, he would almost certainly have known of the use of the metaphor the previous year in *The Emigrant*.

[9] This is a somewhat odd element of the speech because only four of the five great lakes are in Canada.

[10] Since, as Lessing observes in his lengthy and influential discussion of the shield of Achilles in *Laocoon*, "Homer does not describe the shield as finished and complete, but, as it is being wrought. . . . We see not the shield itself, but the divine craftsman at work" (126), there is a nice parallel between the shield and Canada as works in progress (and even between Hephaestus and the crafters of Confederation).

[11] See Roberts's *Complete Poems* 413-44 for the composition and publication history of the poem.

[12] See my "Reflections on the Situation and Study of Canadian Literature in the Long Confederation Period" 25-26 for Confederation as a work that continues to be in progress.

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