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STUDIES
William Douw Lighthall and the Poetics of Imperial Canada

by Daniel O'Leary

> How strange it is that, in the after age,
> When Time's clepsydra will be nearer dry,
> That all the accustomed things we now pass by
> Unmarked, because familiar, shall engage
> The antique reverence of men to be;
> And that quaint interest which prompts the sage
> The silent fathoms of the past to gauge
> Shall keep alive our own past memory,
> Making all great of ours, the garb we wear,
> Our voiceless cities, reft of roof and spire,
> The very skull whence now the eye of fire
> Glances bright sign of what the soul can dare.
> So shall our annals make an envied lore,
> And men will say, "Thus did the men of yore."
>
> —*William Douw Lighthall*,
> Præterita ex Instantibus

The critical disregard of Canadian modernist critics, literary historians and anthologists like A. J. M. Smith, Ralph Gustaffson, and Carl F. Klinck after World War Two has done much to obscure the poetic reputation of a Victorian Montreal poet whose earlier acclaim and associations should have ensured him a more prominent place in the literary history of Quebec. In fact, few intellectual figures in nineteenth-century Canada contributed to as many literary and scholarly discourses as poet, novelist, critic, anthologist, antiquary, archaeologist, First Nations activist, feminist, barrister, and Westmount mayor, William Douw Lighthall. With the possible exception of Edward Hartley Dewart, more than any other Canadian critic Lighthall was responsible for preserving the memory of the earlier generations of Canadian poets, and for gaining an international audience for Canadian poetry. In 1889, when Lighthall's *Songs of the Great Dominion: voices from the forests and waters, the settlements and cities of Canada* (also printed with the title *Canadian Songs and Poems*) was published in Lon-

don by the Walter Scott press in their widely-distributed Oxford Library series, the only other substantial selection of work by Canadian poets was Dewart's *Selections from Canadian Poets,* by then long out of print. Dewart's anthology, issued by the important Montreal press of John Lovell in 1864, had circulated through agents across British North America during the immediate pre-Confederation period, but was not distributed commercially in Britain or the United States. Although Dewart's anthology is important in many respects—not least in contributing a framework for the critical construction of a canonical Canadian poetry—it also includes much that is of purely documentary or historical interest, and the anthology had no impact in gaining for Canadian poets a wider British readership. Through Lighthall's anthology, for the first time Canadian verse was exposed to a transatlantic critical evaluation, and to the friendly reading of the Canadian poetry of Archibald Lampman, Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carmen and other important poets by influential British critics and poets like Edwin Arnold, Theodore Watts-Dunton, William Butler Yeats, William Sharp, J. Addington Symons, Arthur Edward Waite, Oscar Wilde, and others of that accomplished generation (Gibbon 110-12).

Lighthall was also a mentor and publicist for Archibald Lampman, and was a friend who corresponded with him until the end of his life (Lighthall Papers MS216). But in spite of his service to the development of Canadian writing, especially in Quebec, and despite his international reputation as a leading colonial British poet, Lampman's work has suffered from general critical neglect, a circumstance following both from the imperialist nature of his Canadian patriotism, and from the conservative Victorian and stoic character of his best-known poetry and fiction. In the context of a discussion of several of the most valuable Lighthall poems, drawn from his first collection *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals* (1887) and from his later collected verse in his retrospective and definitive *Old Measures* (1922), the following consideration of Lighthall's various interests and activities will draw on the case study methods of recent print culture scholarship by Carole Gerson, Yvan Lamonde, and Patricia Fleming in order to provide a fairer estimation of his literary contribution and importance to Victorian and early 20th-century Quebec literary and intellectual culture. I will also follow historian Donald A. Wright's suggestion in his analysis of Lighthall's thought that "English-Canadian imperialism was both a school of nationalism and an attempt to make sense of modernity, not by rejecting it, but by creating an antimodern space, an intellectual and at times physical retreat from modernity's relentless commitment to innovation and transience and rootlessness" ("W. D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord" 134). I will also

argue that Lighthall's political progressivism and social democratic attitudes, coupled with his romantic anti-modernism, place him in a line of "Red Tory" nationalists later exemplified by George Parkin Grant, Hugh MacLennan, and in our own time by Margaret Atwood, Hugh Hood, Robert Allen, and Erin Moure.

The last influential critic to champion Lighthall's work was John Murray Gibbon, the Governal General's Award-winning author of *The Canadian Mosaic* (1938), who in 1948 contributed a chapter on the poet to W. P. Percival's influential collection of critical essays *Leading Canadian Poets* (Gibbon 107-124). Gibbon likens Lighthall's work in both poetry and prose to the writings of Sir Walter Scott, pointing out that the "names of most of the Montreal poets of that time would have been forgotten had it not been for Lighthall's first anthology" (Gibbon 110). Earlier, writing of Lighthall's anthology in the London *Daily Telegraph*, the fastidious Edwin Arnold, who would later publish Lighthall's novel *The False Chevalier* (1898), especially commended Lighthall's sonnet "Montreal" (Gibbon 112):

> REIGN on, majestic Ville Marie!
> Spread wide thine ample robes of state;
> The heralds cry that thou art great,
> And proud are thy young sons of thee.
> Mistress of half a continent,
> Thou risest from thy girlhood's rest;
> We see thee conscious heave thy breast
> And feel thy rank and thy descent.
>
> Sprung of the saint and chevalier!
> And with the Scarlet Tunic wed!
> Mount Royal's crown upon thy head,
> And, past thy footstool, broad and clear
> St. Lawrence sweeping to the sea;
> Reign on, majestic Ville Marie!
> (Lighthall, *Canadian Songs* 309)

The reception of the *Songs of the Great Dominion* gave great encouragement to the Montreal literary circle associated with Lighthall, a group that included John Reade, the talented and learned *Gazette* literary editor, George Murray, the classical master of the Montreal High School, and also John D. Logan, George Martin, Arthur Weir, John Talon-Lesperance, Rosanna Eleanor Leprohon, and Katherine Livingstone Macpherson. In late 1889 Lighthall and his literary associates founded the Society of Cana-

dian Literature, an organization John Murray Gibbon credits with inspiring the eventual formation of the Canadian Authors' Association (Lighthall Papers MS216). Lighthall's anthology was very popular in Canada as well, and was provided as a subscription premium by several 1890s Canadian journals including *The Canada Presbyterian* and *The Northern Messenger.* The anthology's circulation also led to Lighthall's poetry appearing in a number of important British and commonwealth anthologies, among them Edmund Clarence Stedman's influential *A Victorian Anthology* (1895) and E. A. Help's *Songs and Ballads of Greater Britain* (1912).

Lighthall's *Old Measures: Collected Verse,* a selection of definitive versions of forty-seven poems drawn from his entire career, appeared in 1922, the same year as *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land,* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and the Damned* and his *Tales of the Jazz Age*. Momentous in philosophical discourse, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* also appeared in 1922, and as with *Ulysses*, comparison of Wittgenstein's with Lighthall's own work in philosophy during this period reveals the Montreal author's rootedness in a culture and civilization rapidly disappearing. In December 1921, W. L. Mackenzie King became the eleventh Prime Minister of Canada, beginning the long Liberal reconstruction of an anti-imperialist Canadian nationality, one to supercede and efface the British American romance that had previously animated the idealistic nationalism of generations of Canadian patriot poets and authors, including not only Lighthall, but Charles Mair, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Charles Sangster, Sir Andrew McPhail, Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, and Stephen Leacock, among many others. Much of Lighthall's poetry is explicitly political and takes the view of Canadian identity that had been developed in the immediate pre-Confederation period by journalists, politicians and educationists like Robert Grant Haliburton, Charles Mair, Alexander Morris, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Egerton Ryerson, and others whose imperial federalist sympathies were rooted in notions of a British Canadian ethnicity, Britishness modulated and improved by Canadian conditions and contact with non-British populations.

In *Canadian Songs and Poems* (1889), Lighthall's introductory dedication and section headings for his organization of the poems give clear enough indications of his political and social preoccupations. In the dedication he begins with a quatrain addressed to an English audience:

> When men unto their noblest rise,
> Alike for ever see their eyes;
> Trust us, grand England, we are true,

> And, in your noblest, one with you.
> (Lighthall, *Canadian Songs and Poems* v)

The nobility and chivalry of British identity is a constant theme in Lighthall's poetry, and in the poetry he chose for his two early anthologies. The anti-modernism of his stance is clearly to be interpreted as socially progressive and ethnically inclusive, and Lighthall constantly invokes an imagined chivalric past in which the dignity, civility and justice of the genteel British is seen to overcome sectarian, political, and national factionalism. Lighthall's dedication continues:

> To that sublime cause **The Union of Mankind**, which the British peoples, if they are true to themselves and courageous in the future as they have been in the past, will take to be the reason of existence of their Empire; and to the glory of those peoples in the service of Man; this book is dedicated. (v)

In the abridged, pocket-sized edition of the anthology, printed in square octavo shilling volumes as part of William Sharp's widely-available and attractive Canterbury Poets series, Lighthall provides a new dedicatory poem that even more than that of *Canadian Songs* underscores the pluralist and progressive character of the imperialism espoused by Victorian romantics like Lighthall:

> To history's vastest Brotherhood,—
> Which seas that girdle earth but bind:
> To every man of British blood:—
> To all of the Imperial mind;
> Or who, of any noble race, have by the Empire stood.
>
> What matter races! vain pride
> Who first this brotherhood began;
> Than Pict or Gael we grow more wide,
> Our final brotherhood is Man:
> Unto all union we will hold, so Man yet onward stride.
> (Lighthall, *Canadian Poems and Lays* v)

The transcendentalist tenor of early Canadian imperial nationalist writing is often overlooked, or if noticed, is construed in an uncomplimentary light. In Lighthall's case, and in common with many Canadian nationalist intellectuals in Canada during the period, the imperial romance was interpreted politically as a check against the annexationist capitalist industrialists who had led the world into a bewildering, and anxiety-provoking spiral

of military violence. Donald A. Wright's contention that Lighthall's values are basically "militaristic" need to be qualified insofar as the chivalric impulse steadily animates Lighthall's imperialism, his monarchism adapting a rhetoric of duty, service, and especially justice to the context of nineteenth-century state violence (Wright, "W.D. Lighthall" 154). Given that Lighthall descended from an important military family that included his paternal great-grandfather Major James Wright, the commander of the British settlers along the Chateauguay river during the War of 1812, and also that he himself had served in the McGill College Company of the Prince of Wales' Regiment and in the Royal Victoria Rifles, it is not surprising that a romantic view of the martial spirit would at times dominate his imagination. But Lighthall's military or chivalric attitudes are not put at the service of Jingoism or intolerant imperialist fanaticism. From the point of view of wisdom or correctness, Lighthall's stance certainly invites analysis, but during his period even enlightened cosmopolitans entertained views friendly to some of the claims of the liberal British imperialists. During WW1, for example, George Bernard Shaw frequently expressed the opinion that responsibility for the horrific carnage of modern warfare lay with the aristocratic capitalists he calls "Junker militarists," an opinion we are apt to share. Lighthall's own consciousness of the ambivalence and mixed purpose of many involved in the imperial project is already clear in the qualified tone of his prefatory dedications in his early anthologies. But even the dedicated Fabian Bernard Shaw sharply distinguishes between the "Empire of Lord Dufferin" and the empire of the brutal and stupid Lord Cromer, attacked by the Irish playwright for having adopted the use of torture by bastinado in Egypt against all of the basic assumptions of British justice (O'Leary 171). And in Shaw, as in Lighthall, imperial sympathies are qualified by the expectation that the empire will behave according to its own ideals of social justice and open-minded pluralism.

Lighthall's poetry, his three novels *The Young Seigneur, or, Nation-making, The False Chevalier, or, the lifeguard of Marie Antoinette*, and *The Master of Life: A Romance of the Five Nations*, and his 1909 "libretto" *Hiawatha the Mohawk*, all articulate an activist position on behalf of the socially and politically disadvantaged in a British imperial context. But Lighthall's imperialism is modulated according to group or context: in his "Indian" novels, the novelist follows the tradition of the Joseph Brant of the Loyalist tradition, and the Tecumseh of Charles Mair, enlisting both fictional and historical Mohawks in a league of chivalric gentlemen collectively resisting the unpredictable and chaotic violence of contrary forces that have gained the upper hand elsewhere. In the case of the narratives of

Lighthall's imagined New France, civility, chivalry, and heraldic accommodation unite former enemies in a spirit of justice and lawfulness that focuses especially on memorializing the heroism and nobility of the central historic figures of both camps. The early poem "The Battle of LaPrairie (1691)," which first appeared in *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals* (1887) is a good example of the theme of accommodation and preservation rather than the extinguishing of blended Canadian traditions in Lighthall's poetry:

> That was a brave old epoch,
> Our age of chivalry,
> When the Briton met the Frenchman
> At the fight of La Prairie;
> And the manhood of New England,
> And the Netherlanders true
> And Mohawks sworn, gave battle
> To the Bourbon's lilied blue.
> (Lighthall, *Thoughts* 40)

Here, chivalric traditions are held in common, and reference to blue lilies (which survive in Canadian heraldic semiotics) underscores the heraldic memory of the French past, marking the Anglo-Canadian acknowledgement of the value and dignity of the old French royalist regime. As Lighthall puts it in "Canadian Faith," also from *Thoughts, Moods and Ideals*:

> By the glorious star of England,
> Shining mast-high o'er all oceans;
> In the name of France the glorious;
> In the world-proud name of Europe;
> Whence you draw your great traditions;
> I adjure you trust your country!
> (37)

As with contemporaries George Munro Grant, Nicholas Flood Davin, Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy, in Lighthall's thought the British imperial spirit is perceived as a form of political idealism, standing, protected by the indomitable British fleet, as a semiotic shield against soul destroying and "atheist dangers of the time," or capitalist modernity (Lighthall, "National Hymn" 6). As his acquaintance Henry J. Morgan says of Lighthall in his *Canadian Men and Women of the Time* (1912):

> ...an imperialist in principle, but at the same time a strong believer in the necessity and advantage of organizing the intellectual and higher interests of

> Canadian nationality and retaining state ownership and control of forests, railways, land tenure, coal mines, and other public resources. (657)

For Lighthall, as for a large field of idealistic Canadian nationalists of the Victorian period, the semiotics, heraldry, folklore, history and vocabulary of national self-definition drawn from the European past allowed for the unified cultural consensus necessary for the organization and cohesion of socially progressive forces: an instance of an *imagined community*, to use Benedict Anderson's term, organized against the future Archibald Lampman paints so vividly in "The City of the End of Things." Respect for articulations of the values of a romantic (and possibly epistemologically untenable) past, and ritualized memorial of historical events to revive the deep sources of the nationalist vocabulary, promote highness of purpose and stoicism as antidotes to the narcissism and tawdriness of emerging tin-pan alley mob culture (Nelles *passim*). Given the signal success of the Tory romance in early Canada, it is curious that Linda Colley neglects any mention of Canadian British sentiment in her important study of British Tory nationalism *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837.* Colley's book is perhaps the best recent work to treat the liberal progressive political tendencies that Canadian nationalists associated with romantic and transcendental Tory ideas of a providential "Britishness." Respectable, Middle-class, and genteel Victorian Canadians were especially fond of pointing out that their persistent identification of Canadian with British culture preserved for Canada a rootedness in European civilization, protecting both civility and a chivalric past in which Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson—and, perhaps more importantly, Burns and Scott—were also in some mystical sense Canadian (Coleman 3-45, and *passim*). Generally, this sense of cultural connectedness, guaranteed by the "British connection," is contrasted with the social chaos, violence, and egotistical populism said to characterize American society.

It would be unfair to Lighthall to overlook the consistency and good faith of his commitments. His interest in Canadian First Nations, for instance, was maintained throughout his career, and was by no means a simple rationalization of his imperialism. In a ceremony in 1909, Lighthall, whose paternal lineage was rooted in old New York, was made a chief by the Caughnawaga Iroquois and bestowed with the name Ticonderoga, or Tekenderoken, no doubt with a keen sense of the mixed historical associations of such a designation, associations Donald Wright argues were part of the pattern of Lighthall's "antimodernism" (Wright, "W.D. Lighthall" 136). Lighthall also spent a good deal of his time scrambling through the brush and forest of the then suburban Côte-des-Neiges and Westmount as

an amateur archaeologist keen to preserve relics of the native culture of Hochelaga. In the process, in July of 1898, he made an important discovery of what at the time he described as a "Hochelagan Burial Burying-ground" on the south-eastern slope of Mount Royal in Westmount, relating the discovery to the Mohawk culture that had been extinguished by "Algonkins and Hurons about 1560" (Lighthall, "Hochelagans" 199-203). Much later, in March 1922, in a paper read before the Royal Society of Canada meeting in Montreal, Lighthall retracted his attribution of the prehistoric graves to the Mohawk, or Hochelagans, having come, correctly, to the conclusion that the graves belonged to a much older, culturally unrelated "Algonkin" group (Lighthall, "Westmount 'Stone-lined Grave' Race" 73). But his impulse to link the prehistoric remains to a surviving Canadian First Nation, one with a long history of support of the British empire in America, is evidence of genuine respect and curiosity about First Nations culture. This interest was a life-long one characterized not by a purely self-interested misinterpretation in the service of his imperialism, but by practical and sincere work to ameliorate the social disadvantages of native fellow Canadians. In 1890, Lighthall became a founding member of The Canadian Indian Research and Aid Society, and supported the publication of a short-lived journal *The Canadian Indian* that produced, starting in October of 1890, twelve monthly issues in Owen Sound, Ontario before suffering the usual fate of small Canadian magazines, however worthy. In the society, Lighthall joined Sir Daniel Wilson, George Monroe Grant, Edgar Dewdney, Sir William Dawson, George Mercer Dawson, Sandford Fleming, John Reade, John McLean, and J. M. Lemoine, as well as Mohawk chiefs J. B. Brant and Solomon Loft of Deseronto, the Ojibway minister John Jacobs of Sarnia, and the fascinating Mohawk scholar and actor Ojijatekha (baptized John Brant-Sero).

In 1908, drawing on his researches on First Nations subject matter, Lighthall published a novel entitled *The Master of Life: A Romance of the Five Nations and of Prehistoric Montreal* with the important early Canadian Toronto press Musson. This novel deserves fuller study, and contains many finished and fully-realized passages that in their handling Mohawk traditions relating to Hiawatha resemble the treatment of Irish myths in early Edwardian Irish writing in the novelists of the Irish literary revival. But Lighthall's fiction was in the service of ideological ends contrary to Yeats and George Russell, and dedicated to an opposite interpretation of history, an interpretation that was perfectly orthodox in Edwardian Canada. As Donald Wright observes, Lighthall's historical fiction placed him in a tradition on the side of "loyalism and Toryism, the twin currents of

Upper Canadian identity," one that also included Sir Walter Scott, John Richardson, William Kirby, and Sir Gilbert Parker:

> This was very much Lighthall's project: history offered inspiration, direction, continuity. An unbroken line connected imperial Canada to New France to Hochelaga (Wright, *Professionalization of History* 9-11).

Similarly, Lighthall's Hiawatha stands in opposition against the contrary American romance of the past—similar in literary culture if not in politics—and against the republican Hiawatha and Evangeline of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, whose heroes embody American, rather that British, historical values.

An aspect of Lighthall's thought is a quasi-theological belief in a sacrosanct constitutional continuity of the Canadian with ancient British law, and in the accord of both with a more primal human law that civilization universally shares. As a barrister, Lighthall's sense of the transcendental primacy of law and justice involves its independence of any particular constitutional tradition. The French and the Iroquois equally share in the cultural history of universal justice, for Lighthall a justice grounded in a mystical legality of reality and nature herself. In *The Land of Manitou* (1916), a long blank-verse poem published while Lighthall's son and daughter were serving in Europe, and later included in *Old Measures*, the poet embodies justice in the spirit of "Manitou-Ewitchi":

> The Manitou-Ewitchi rules the wilds.
> He watches ever, and when evil men,
> Infringe the great laws of the wilderness,
> The long range trembles. He who then defies
> Must brave the tempest crashing 'round his path,
> Thunders and plunging bolts of fire; huge rocks
> Torn by mad torrents hunt him, while around,
> The indignant precipice reverberates....
> (Lighthall, *The Land of Manitou* 65)

Of the setting of the poem, Mont and Lac Tremblant, Lighthall remarks in a note that the "district is a Government Park, and no settlements exist between it and the Arctic" (65). Even Manitou-Ewitchi is protected by the Law of the Dominion, and his sphere of authority is accommodated and defended. And this is not to say that Lighthall is sanguine about the fate of the First Nations or that he ignores the tragic side of their history. In both of his early anthologies he includes poems of his own composition, and by

Frederick George Scott and E. Pauline Johnson, that elegize the destruction and disappearance of native culture.

Lighthall's admiration of the Mohawks is especially marked, and the usual Victorian Canadian theme of Mohawk loyalism is a central feature of his writing with First Nations themes. This is a vital factor in his important encouragement of the work of Mohawk poet E. Pauline Johnson, who is included in both Lighthall anthologies several years before the appearance of *The White Wampum* (1895), her first collection of poetry. Lampman's note on Johnson is particularly explicit in this regard:

> Miss E. Pauline Johnson is interesting on account of her race as well as her strong and cultured verse. She is of the Mohawks of Brantford. This race, today thoroughly civilized, and occupying high positions all over Canada, have had a wonderfully faithful record of unswerving British alliance for over two hundred and twenty years, during which their devoted courage was the factor which decided the predominance of the Anglo-Saxon in North America. They produced Brant and Tecumseh, and the visit of their chiefs to Queen Anne is recorded in *The Spectator.* At the close of the American Revolution they retired to their present reserves, where they have prospered. (Lighthall, *Songs* 453)

The inclusion of the Mohawks as a charter group among the Loyalists is significant given the central place of the Loyalist myth in Lighthall's conception of the Canadian past. In *Old Measures*, perhaps the most successful poem in the collection is the "unfinished" narrative poem "The Loyalists," in which Lighthall presents an account of his own Loyalist ancestors and their settlement in Quebec. One of the key motifs in the poem, and a feature frequently repeated in Lighthall's writing, is a sympathetic recognition of the dignity and nobility of the French Canadians. In a Loyalist patriarch's free verse meditation on a sword used during the conquest of Quebec, Lighhall writes:

> Smiled the father; —then replied he: "One great scene that blade remembers
> Sleeplessly. In youth I wore it in the Square at Montreal
> Called Place d'Armes, —as strange provincial and un-British as a dream.
> I was ensign then. Our lines along the west side stood in silence
> On the conquered soil, their muskets grasped like statues, and the cannon
> In their scarlet-coated centre, primed for thunder. Gasped and gazed
> The folk at us their hated foes, and praying women crammed the temple
> Standing there, with tower and belfry, a rude marvel of old France,—
> Refuge of their wounded souls, as sharply alien unto us.
> Now was heard a solemn sound along the street of Notre Dame,

> Eastward faint, then near and loud, a tramp of men that could not speak,
> Not the march of Braves to battle, nor parade, but to the burial.
> Of some mighty hope untimely rendered unto fate. The echo
> From black walls, of house and convent, church, and rampart of the city,
> Regular and soblike came. It checked the joy within our bosoms.
> (Lighthall, *Old Measures* 48-49)

Lighthall's dedication of *Old Measures* "To the Poets of Confederation my friends and companions" suggests that Lighthall was conscious and probably saddened by his frequent exclusion from consideration with the so-called Confederation group that included Lampman, Carmen, and Roberts. Nor did *Old Measures* gain Lighthall a more sustained critical attention. Bliss Carmen and Lorne Pierce's important anthology *Our Canadian Literature* (1922) includes only a token selection from Lighhall's verse, and A. M. Stephen's *The Golden Treasury of Canadian Verse* (1928) ignores him altogether. This begins a pattern of disregard continued through the rest of the century. A. J. M. Smith's once-standard *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* (1960), despite including a good deal of minor Victorian writing, overlooks Lighthall, and even Carl F. Klinck and Reginald E. Watter's extensive and otherwise excellent *Canadian Anthology* (1966) fails to provide a single example of his work. Given Lighthall's importance as an anthologist, and the influence his choices had on subsequent anthologies, his dismissal from the canon is pointed and inexplicable from the point of view of literary qualities alone. But the real embarrassment of Lighthall's work is not its superficiality, its crudity, or its obsolescence. In fact, Lighthall is one of the late Victorians who exemplifies the relaxation of prosodic constraints typical of early modernist writing, and his later poetry is accomplished and frequently compelling. It is the obsolescence and awkwardness of his view of Canadian identity, and his imperialism, however transcendentalist in conception, that put him out of step with the modernist literary tradition of the new Canada. Like George Parkin Grant, Harold Adams Innis, and others who have tried to retain or retrench the sense of Canadian identity formulated by social activist nationalists of the imperial period, Lighthall has suffered from the postwar rejection of a romance once central to Canadian self-definition.

Of course, given the province's fractious political situation, the sometimes acrid cultural nationalism of francophone Quebec and, especially, the cosmopolitan and multicultural character of current Montreal English language writing, that there are few English language writers left in Quebec who in print who espouse—or even recollect—the transatlantic cultural nationalism of poets like Lighthall is not surprising. The intense

pressure on Anglo-Canadian culture in Quebec, and the displacement and migration of a many Quebecers from the older regions of Anglo-Quebec culture in the Eastern Townships and Ottawa River area, have worked to prevent development of any cohesive sense of Anglo-Canadian identity in the province. But although explicit positive reference to Tory historical narratives is generally absent from the contemporary poetry of Quebec, the interest of Montreal poets like Stephanie Bolster and Jason Camlot in Victorian subject matter and studies provides at least some evidence of the survival of transatlantic cultural sympathies, and indicates that some Anglo-Quebec authors share in a wider Canadian transnationalism differing significantly from purely North American and continentalist points of view. The transnational qualities of Canadian identity in Quebec frequently intensify other transatlantic affinities as well. In the case of Erin Moure, the organic relation of Canadian to European literary culture deepens her response to a Galician poetic tradition potentially alien given the poet's geographic displacement and ethnic hybridity. A poet rooted both in Montreal and Calgary, Moure's highly-successful creative translations evoke in sensitive Canadian English the sustained *gnosis* of the originals. As quasi-colonial works, Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* and Margaret Atwood's recent *Penelopiad* also provide examples of Canadian works that retain a classicist impulse ontologically *interior* rather than foreign to the traditions they elaborate. And what may be termed the *quasi-colonial* features of this stream of Quebec and Canadian poetry flow from the same cultural sources as their originals. And at least in this qualified sense, Lighthall's poetry bears a resemblance to more recent generations of Anglo-Quebec writing.

Works by William Douw Lighthall

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