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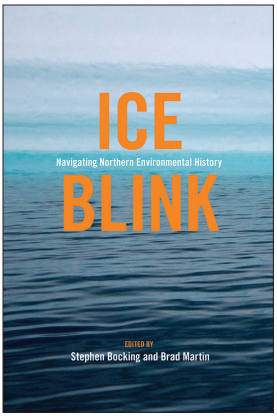


## ICE BLINK: NAVIGATING NORTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY Edited by Stephen Bocking and Brad Martin

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# 5

# Many Tiny Traces: Antimodernism and Northern Exploration Between the Wars

*Tina Adcock*

When, in 1935, the mining engineer George Douglas and the surveyor Guy Blanchet undertook a summer of prospecting together in northern Canada, they should have been ideal partners. Over and above their decade-long friendship, both were experienced northern travellers, and shared a level-headed, professional approach that emphasized careful preparation for fieldwork and its responsible execution. However, their divergent styles of work, rooted in disparate philosophical frameworks, caused friction, as Douglas described:

> Blanchet + I, both competent and experienced in our respective methods, were simply quite hopeless together. Blanchet is like an Indian who knows how to handle an axe and a crooked knife and nothing else, yet with these implements will "get by." While I am like a carpenter who must have many and complicated tools but who knows their purpose, when and how to handle them. And to keep them in good shape![1]

These different manners of being in the north were also evident in their respective attitudes toward maintaining camp. Blanchet again evinced what Douglas termed an "Indian" indifference to comfort, cleanliness, and order, whereas the latter required (though this word is unspoken) a more "civilized" approach to living in the bush. Their contrast crystallized in Douglas' enduring struggle to keep their cooking equipment clean. Many years later, Blanchet wrote amusedly: "We were different in our habits. In washing dishes, George would boil two pails of water if even for one cup, one spoon. I would swish mine in the lake."[2]

Despite these differences, both Blanchet and Douglas travelled, and thought about their northern travels in ways that signal their participation in the historical phenomenon of antimodernism. Emerging first at the *fin de siècle*, antimodernism responded to the political, economic, social, and cultural changes born of industrialization and modernization. Its dominant characteristic, in the classic phrase of Jackson Lears, was "the recoil from an 'overcivilized' modern existence to more intense forms of physical or spiritual experience" thought to exist in Oriental, medieval, or primitive cultures. This desire to retreat to alternative times and places was "ambivalent, often coexisting with enthusiasm for material progress" in Western society.[3]

This chapter casts Blanchet's and Douglas' northern expeditions of the 1920s and 1930s as admittedly vigorous examples of the therapeutic recourse to nature that many middle-class Canadians, particularly their fellow Ontarians, sought from the late nineteenth century onward. After outlining the general characteristics of their early twentieth-century, central Canadian variant of antimodernism, this chapter will delineate the particular antimodern sensibilities these two men displayed during their interwar northern expeditions. Evidence for their beliefs arises from their rich troves of unpublished field notes and letters, and their published articles and books. Blanchet cultivated an active, martial, and playfully "Indian" engagement with the northern environment. His foils to this performance were the Denesuline (Chipewyan Dene), whom he believed had fallen into physical and mental decay through their contact with southern civilization. Douglas made carefully controlled forays into a northern environment that he viewed nostalgically, and which seemed to change little, in contrast to the rest of the world. His private experience of the passage of time in the north increasingly slid away from a public time in which

he had less control over his journeys, and which yielded up what was, to Douglas, the lamentable industrialization of the region.

By examining antimodernism within the context of northern modernization and industrialization, I pursue a richer understanding of how historical actors experienced and responded to the momentous social and technological changes to life and work in this region between the wars. Canadians' renewed interest in the economic prospects of the Northwest Territories after 1918 motivated many of these interlocking developments. Excitement flared with Imperial Oil's discovery of a "gusher" forty-five miles north of Fort Norman on the Mackenzie River in August 1920. Private citizens poured down the river the following summer to stake claims, while the Department of the Interior hastened to erect the field office of the newly-minted Northwest Territories Branch at Fort Smith. This was only the opening act in a series of resource-oriented discoveries and rushes throughout the interwar period, in which Douglas (and Blanchet, upon one occasion) participated.

Earlier in this volume, Andrew Stuhl foregrounded the crucial role that travelling scientists played in developing and realizing plans for northern modernization and industrialization between 1918 and 1939. This chapter focuses, in complementary fashion, upon the contributions of travelling technicians, or technical fieldworkers, to the same ends. Much of the fieldwork and travel that occurred in the interwar north was related to the potential or actual development of resources. Although the federal government left such work to the private sector, several of its branches provided maps, surveys, aerial photographs, and other information to prospectors and mining companies to aid and abet industrial activity. The Geological and Topographical Surveys sent teams of fieldworkers north throughout this period to perform geological investigations and control and track surveys, as well as to investigate the incidence of timber, minerals, water powers, and other resources. Such efforts were directed mainly toward the Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake areas, where the corporate and industrial gaze rested most keenly. The director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch (as it was known from 1923), O. S. Finnie, also sent special investigators and exploratory engineers on fact-finding missions throughout the region up to 1931. Working in sparsely populated areas on stringent government budgets, these men, including Blanchet, W. H. B. Hoare, L. T. Burwash, and J. Dewey Soper, travelled predominantly by

the age-old methods of dog team, canoe, and foot, and occasionally by the newer expedient of the power boat.

Journeys powered by muscle and sinew continued into the 1930s, but they were increasingly overshadowed by newer adventures in what Morris Zaslow terms "the war-induced fashion of directed, organized mass actions attacking difficulties head-on with the latest technology."[4] Between 1928 and 1932, several aviation companies partnered with central Canadian mining interests to initiate large-scale aerial prospecting operations in the Northwest Territories. Companies such as Dominion Explorers Limited (Domex) and Northern Aerial Mineral Exploration (N.A.M.E.) spent unprecedented amounts of money and manpower west of Hudson Bay in 1928, north from the Shield to the southeastern shores of Great Bear Lake and around Bathurst Inlet in 1929, and in the Coppermine Mountains and around Great Bear Lake in 1930, searching for wealth in the northern rock.

Although such levels of expenditure proved unsustainable as the Depression worsened, the increasing value of gold and the already high value of radium set off another wave of rushes after 1932. More prospectors now flew to the shores of Great Bear Lake, Great Slave Lake, and Lake Athabasca to stake claims on increasingly trodden territory. The blossoming interwar symbiosis between the northern mining and aviation industries led to improvements in the north's communication systems through the spread of air mail and wireless services. Perhaps the most significant amelioration to northern life, however, concerned the region's transportation networks. River transport options were expanded through competition between companies and with the airlines, and were modernized, resulting in faster, better fleets and lower freight rates. Regular air service was available in the Mackenzie district from 1929, and airplanes became an effective, reliable means of transportation there in the 1930s.

In her recent monograph, Liza Piper deftly demonstrates how the post-1921 industrialization of the large northern lakes drew that region into global economic networks of capital and production, while simultaneously remaking local environments and societies. This was an integrative endeavour that worked with, not against northern ecological and environmental constraints, and that built upon extant networks of knowledge and movement embedded in the pre-war north.[5] The additive nature of change meant that old ways of being in the north rubbed alongside the new for

some time after 1921. The geographer Trevor Lloyd observed in 1943 that "northern travel … is a curious mixture of methods familiar 150 years ago with those of today."[6]

At this point of friction, a critique of northern industrialization and modernization emerged in the interwar era among men like Douglas and Blanchet, southern fieldworkers with many years of northern experience. They were wary of the ways in which the new economic and technological imperatives of these large-scale processes were coming to privilege relationships between northern sojourners and environments predicated upon *distance* rather than *proximity*. One vital factor in this paradigmatic shift was the increasing application of fossil fuels to northern travel. Outboard motors and airplane engines "substituted for and magnified human effort" in a manner that disrupted the traditional framework for experiencing and thereby knowing the north.[7] This was, in Bruce Hevly's excellent phrase, the "authority of adventurous observation," an exploratory notion which construed heroic bodily challenge as a marker of epistemological credibility.[8] Northern travellers who had fought the rapids of sprightly northern rivers, portaged blackfly-plagued trails, and mushed long miles through frigid northern forests earned some authority to speak about the environment and to be believed because they had endured the rigours of the field. By obviating, and thus distancing the human body from such rigours, motor-bound travel challenged, and would eventually make obsolete, older rubrics of authority and experience that had assigned a premium to information gained through proximate, often difficult encounters with northern landscapes.

Airplanes also made panoptical views newly possible in northern Canada. The budding normative relationship between distance and knowledge was fanned by the federal government's program of aerial surveys, which began in the late 1920s and continued into the postwar period. As Stephen Bocking has shown, the airplane made possible a new mode of interaction with the northern landscape, one that asserted an objective kind of authority through its divorce from immediate but sometimes faulty sensory experience.[9] Moreover, as Marionne Cronin describes in her chapter in this volume, the northern bush plane lay at the heart of an emerging modern discourse of colonial knowledge and possession that privileged distant views as the best means toward the codification of the unknown, and ultimately toward the rational, progressive conversion of

"empty" northern space into places of settlement and industry. Despite Douglas' and Blanchet's participation in this colonial enterprise and the integration of aerial transport into their fieldwork, they were united in their fundamental ambivalence toward the airplane. Along with many of their sojourning colleagues, they regretted the passing of the active, bodily engagement with the land that older methods of travel had fostered, and mourned the waning authority accorded to close encounters with the northern environment. Unlike the inexperienced southerners bound for the Klondike that Jonathan Peyton describes in his chapter, seasoned northern travellers like Douglas and Blanchet usually found such encounters agreeably stimulating, rather than frustrating or alienating.

The laments of Douglas, Blanchet, and their like-minded colleagues point to the "precarious vulnerability" of the modern colonial and industrial projects pursued at this time in northern Canada. New imperial scholars have taught us to probe with care the disquiets, estrangements, and yearnings embedded within such projects, for such reactions expose the inconsistencies and weaknesses within larger colonial networks of power and knowledge.[10] Antimodernism provided certain structures of feeling through which Douglas and Blanchet could express their doubts about the ultimate benefit of the modernizing project in which they were engaged. Feelings could literally lend structure to places: in the course of their fieldwork, both men created unique personal topographies and timescapes, which they superimposed upon various northern landscapes. The following analysis unfolds the importance of these spaces partly through the close examination of *traces*, as described in the published and unpublished narratives of Douglas' and Blanchet's northern expeditions. Traces are material inscriptions of past activity on a landscape. As William Turkel notes, they can be read as "indexical signs," or things that signify other things and thus imply physical or causal connections between the two.[11] Douglas and Blanchet used traces upon northern ground to interpret past events and to construct historical narratives that enabled them to make sense of changes there and in the outside world. Traces also bridge the era in which they were created and that in which they are read, "making the past legible and eroding temporal boundaries."[12] They both clarified and blurred experiences of northern time as well as space for this chapter's protagonists, as will be seen below.

The significance of the traces herein lies in their contestation of the emerging hegemony of distance, which the new industrial order was embedding within structures of power, capital, and knowledge in the interwar north. Resources there were severed from local environments, transformed into commodities, and sold in faraway markets for the benefit and enrichment of southerners.[13] Meanwhile, as a new generation of prospectors, geologists, and surveyors flew over northern landscapes in the 1930s, their views from on high literally shrank evidence of a peopled terrain—the tiny settlements, the "clearings, graves, and debris that people leave behind"—to insignificance and irrelevance.[14] Still travelling over ground, Douglas and Blanchet noticed and valued these traces. Their continued attachment to proximate ways of knowing and experiencing the northern environment speaks to a divergent, less well understood set of sensibilities. It offers a point of departure for telling a different story about sojourners' experiences of—and resistance to—change in the modern colonial north.

Full appreciation of these sentiments requires a brief, formal introduction to the persons to whom they belonged. George Douglas (1875–1963), born in Halifax into a family of military officers and medical doctors, had originally wished to become an officer in the Royal Navy. After failing the necessary examinations, he trained instead as a marine engineer in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and served as fifth engineer with the White Star and Allan Lines until 1900. A stopover in South Africa during the Boer War soured Douglas on the warship and armaments work in which he had apprenticed, and to which he had planned to return. His cousin, the American mining magnate James Douglas, employed him instead as chief power plant engineer at the Moctezuma Copper Company mine in Nacozari, Mexico. Over the next decade, Douglas specialized in the development of gas-powered engines and generators for use in mining operations. He worked as a roving consultant for the Douglas consortium of copper and silver mines in the American southwest, and later for Phelps-Dodge, which bought the Douglas holdings in 1908. In the interwar era, he also worked for the United Verde Company of Clarkdale, Arizona, and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Funding from these interests and others enabled Douglas to make a series of exploratory and prospecting trips to Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake between 1910 and 1940.

Guy Blanchet (1884–1966), born into a genteel lower-middle-class Ottawa family of thirteen, also longed for an adventurous, mobile career. His

degree in mining engineering from McGill led him first to Lille, Alberta, a mining town near the Crowsnest Pass, where he worked as supervisory mining engineer in 1905–06. He then worked on surveying parties based out of Edmonton for several years, and passed the exams to become a Dominion Land Surveyor in 1911. As a newly minted federal civil servant, he spent the next decade as chief of parties surveying baselines and meridians in northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. He excelled at this difficult work, prompting the Surveyor General to name him, in 1918, "one of the most competent and efficient surveyors in the service."[15] Between 1917 and 1919, while undertaking exploratory work on the headwaters of the Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan, Blanchet designed and implemented modifications to the standard control stadia survey. He did so to facilitate the accurate capture of the complicated shoreline and island topographies characteristic of the northern lakes on which he was travelling. This method was later applied to the Topographical Survey's work north of the sixtieth parallel in the 1920s, in which Blanchet played a leading role. The details of Douglas' and Blanchet's interwar fieldwork in the Territories are embedded in the narrative that follows.

## A Southern Antimodernism for the North

Antimodernism can be understood as a complex of related reactions to the rapid structural changes that modernization brought to everyday life in the Western world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These included the emergence of secular nation-states and of capitalist, industrial economies, the dramatic adjustment of perceptions of space and time brought about by new systems of communication and transportation, and the emphasis upon new ideals of individualism, science, and technical rationality.[16] While antimodernists were not immune to the widespread enthusiasm for material and moral progress that accompanied these changes, they often proffered dissent, based on their memories of and nostalgia for past modes of existence.[17] Although Lears originally characterized antimodernism as a late nineteenth-century movement prevalent among the middle and upper classes in the northeastern United States, further studies have replicated, confirmed, and built upon his conclusions to the point where antimodernism has been declared a fundamental aspect of the

twentieth-century experience.[18] Various North American, Ontarian-Canadian, and northernist strands of antimodernism provided the context for Blanchet's and Douglas' actions.

One pervasive and persistent outcropping of antimodernism, the back-to-nature movement, spanned North America and bridged the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[19] Most commonly found among middle- and upper-class city dwellers, it was rooted in a worry that modern, urban living, often equated with "overcivilization," could be detrimental to one's health. The hectic pace of city life was thought to bring about nervousness and anxiety, while the lack of physical activity in white-collar jobs, in which an increasing amount of the population worked, could cause physical enervation. Either way, the issue was the sapping of one's strength, for which the term neurasthenia was devised, and for which the cure of outdoor recreation was most often recommended. In rural and wild environments, urbanites sought remedial activities that ranged from the gentle, such as cycling, birdwatching, or walking in the countryside, to the strenuous, which included "hiking, camping, canoeing, and alpine climbing."[20] This particular kind of recoil from overcivilization, in its focus on active health and wellness, was an important plank in the therapeutic world view of antimodernism.

The rise of the wilderness holiday was closely connected to trepidation among social critics in the United States, Britain, and Canada that individual cases of neurasthenia heralded the collective physical and mental degeneration of their societies. This reading of events reflected the cultural prevalence at the turn of the century of various theories about race, evolution, and biology based loosely on the work of Charles Darwin. Social Darwinism, as developed through the ideas of Herbert Spencer and others, cast "all sorts of contemporary problems or phenomena as symptoms of racial decline" brought about by overcivilization.[21] Critics fearing for the future concentrated most on the young, white, and male body—that belonging to the paradigmatic citizen and future national leader.[22]

Cultural representations of masculinity attached to Canadian soldiers serving in the First World War stressed the role of the country's wilderness in toughening the minds and bodies of men for European battlefields. The nation's archetypal soldier was conceived to be a "pure and rugged backwoodsman who lived his life far from the stultifying influence of city and university," despite the rather different composition, in reality, of the

national corps.[23] In the interwar period, particularly in central Canada, masculine antimodernism was tinged with anti-American and pro-northern sentiments. Degeneration of the Canadian population was commonly associated with the growing evidence of American cultural influence in the country. Personal and national regeneration could be accomplished through recourse to the iconic Canadian therapeutic space, the north, which many thought was the source of the country's racial identity and potency.[24] This was less often the far north of the Subarctic or Arctic than the north of the Canadian Shield, which was relatively accessible to central Canadian cities.

In addition to its characterization as a primeval wilderness playground in which men could regain lost strength and vigour, the north was also regarded as a proto-agricultural and proto-industrial landscape. It became understood as a "second" frontier, following upon the first western Canadian one, that a new wave of pioneers would develop for the benefit of the nation.[25] This view was strengthened by the mineral discoveries made throughout the near and far north in these decades, and the popular and corporate enthusiasm with which these were greeted. Contemporary government policy on the Arctic and Subarctic also reflected this tendency to look to the past and the future simultaneously. In the case of wildlife management, federal bureaucrats combined "the antimodernist desire to preserve wildlife as the most visible remnant of an authentic but fading wilderness and the modern faith in bureaucratic management as a means to cultivate and manage wildlife populations for recreational and commercial purposes."[26]

The following discussion will focus on the backward-looking, nostalgic elements of Blanchet's and Douglas' antimodern sentiments. Yet both also worked toward and believed in the development of the north. After Douglas' first expedition in 1911–12 found traces of copper close to Great Bear Lake, George urged James Douglas, the expedition's sponsor, to fund further exploration in the region, particularly around McTavish Bay. But worldwide copper markets had tumbled in 1912, and James Douglas became more interested in efforts to locate carnotite deposits in Colorado from which uranium could be refined. The great irony, as Douglas recounted regretfully in letters to friends, was that had his cousin sponsored a second pre-war or wartime expedition to Great Bear Lake, the deposits of pitchblende there could have been located fifteen years prior to Gilbert

LaBine's famous encounter with that same mineral. Douglas believed that James Douglas' great desire for radioactive ores, combined with Phelps-Dodge's massive amounts of capital and organizational capacity, would have led to an earlier, more methodical development of industrial mining on Great Bear Lake.[27]

In their publications of the interwar period, both Douglas and Blanchet argue for careful optimism about the productive future of the north.[28] They favoured prudent, long-term development of the country by large mining corporations or by governments, even as the economic boom of the late 1920s fostered an opposing paradigm: a clutch of new, well-funded syndicates with little northern experience and high hopes of striking it rich quickly in so-called "virgin" territory. Domex courted both men as potential fieldworkers, and Blanchet accepted the temporary position offered because the company's owners shared his belief in the north's potential: "I was getting tired of being a prophet in the official wilderness and to meet a group of men who had faith in the country and asked me to help them prove it to be worthwhile—it offered a new outlet."[29]

Personal profit seems never to have figured in their enthusiasm for development. Rather, the chief feature of their northern progressivism was their belief in the region's economic potential, and their corollary desire to prove prevailing myths about the north—its barrenness, emptiness, harshness, and uselessness—wrong. This was particularly so when it came to the northern places they knew best and cherished most. In a letter to his fellow explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Douglas was uncharacteristically boosterish: "With the great plains to the south and east adapted to raising reindeer, with coal, iron, copper, and oil deposits within a few hundred miles of each other, the [Great] Bear Lake country is bound to be one of the greatest mining and industrial districts of the continent. … It is only a question of time."[30] A passage in one of Blanchet's government reports placed the reader upon an imagined promontory farther to the southeast: "Viewing the so called Barren Lands in August … enlivened by the colours of its vegetation and animated by the roving bands of caribou, it seems incredible that the country is destined to remain an unproductive waste."[31] Yet even as they constructed future hyperborean empires in their minds, Blanchet and Douglas sought out the interwar north precisely because civilization and industry had seemingly touched the region but lightly. This "pre-modern physical and psychological zone of retreat" permitted

them to experience important things that they found lacking in modern life, and to achieve rejuvenation through those experiences.[32]

## The Martial North

From 1923 to 1926, Guy Blanchet undertook summertime fieldwork on the western Barrens, heading north, east, and southeast from Great Slave Lake on behalf of the Topographical Survey of Canada. He led parties of four engaged in controlled stadia traverse and exploratory track surveys that aimed to assess, more correctly than previous surveys, the number, sizes, and shapes of the rivers and lakes surrounding the height of land dividing the Arctic Ocean and Hudson Bay watersheds.[33] This work was meant to extend the network of control surveys and magnetic observations in the north, to provide ground control for future aerial surveys, and to enable the immediate publication of new and better maps for public distribution. Blanchet was also tasked with gathering information about the character and resources of the country east and north of Great Slave Lake, about which the federal government still knew very little. His official instructions each year mandated a report upon methods of transport, routes of travel, Indigenous peoples, game and wildlife, mining activity, geological structures, timber, waterpowers, and other notable residents and features of this region.[34] Blanchet also took numerous photographs of the landscapes through which he travelled; other members of his party made studies of flora, bird life, and geology, according to their individual expertise. Blanchet's yearly reports on the Great Slave Lake region were collated and published in pamphlet form by the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch (NWTYB) in 1926.

In 1928, Blanchet was seconded from his position with the Survey to become coordinator of operations for Domex's new program of aerial exploration. Blanchet worked at their base at Tavane, on the west coast of Hudson Bay, during the year 1928–29. He wrote bimonthly reports to the Topographical Survey, conveying information about that region's geography, topography, natural resources, Indigenous cultures, sea ice and marine wildlife, and ease of aerial operation. This last category included comments about typical wind and weather conditions and visibility during flights made in all seasons, as well as the suitability of various landing

and docking places nearby. Blanchet also made aerial exploratory surveys and sketches, and took magnetic observations throughout the winter. Upon his return south, the NWTYB published a report on the resources of the Keewatin and northeastern Mackenzie districts based on Blanchet's missives from the field. Detailed personal journals from all but his 1923 trip are extant, and take the form of separate or continuous letters to his wife, Eileen. Together with the many articles, several pamphlets, and one book that Blanchet published based on his fieldwork in this decade, the diaries reveal several strains of antimodernism that reflect wider cultural discourses about masculinity, savagery, and civilization in early twentieth-century Canada and the United States.

From the late nineteenth century onward, hegemonic ideals of masculinity in North America took on a physically active, vigorous, even martial character.[35] The figurehead of this movement was the American president Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt. His call for a "strenuous life" in the 1890s became synonymous with any kind of virile, manly endeavour, and antithetical to the overcivilized effeminacy thought to pervade North American culture. Blanchet's journals reflect many of these concerns regarding civilization and chronicle his adopted solution: an active and "natural" masculinity, entwined with antimodern sentiment, which would counteract the banes of modern life. He celebrated certain bodily signifiers of masculinity, a martial engagement with the landscape, the elevation of the "primitive" life over that of "civilized," urban society, and the revitalization of his mental and sensory abilities.

Over these arduous summers of travel, Blanchet gloried in the strengthening of his frame, particularly the conversion of fat into muscle. "I was feeling myself last night to see if I was losing my fat and I think all the soft stuff has gone," he wrote, not long into their travels in 1924.[36] By the end of these seasons, he often felt in top physical condition: "I don't think I ever felt more fit in my life. Lean and my muscles working smoothly…."[37] The sleekness of his middle-aged body in the field prompted positive comparisons with youthful vigour. He enjoyed being "flat + lean as a boy," disparaging by implication the softer contours of his urban body.[38] Blanchet's short, compact figure rendered him peculiarly fit for an iconic display of strength in the north—the ability to pack heavy loads over portages using a "tump line" anchored around one's forehead. While Douglas reckoned conservatively that the average man could stand 70-pound loads,

Fig. 5.1: Guy Blanchet in August 1924, standing beside a cairn his field party had built on the shore of the Coppermine River. Another masculine feature of Blanchet's northern fieldwork was the opportunity to grow a thick beard, such as he sports here. Image J-00323, courtesy of Janet Blanchet and the BC Archives, Royal British Columbia Museum. Cropped from original photograph.

Blanchet regularly took 120-pound loads, and could pack 140 pounds over half a mile.[39]

A connected theme in Blanchet's journals is the sheer force with which he confronted the northern landscape. His task of clarifying the headwaters of the arctic and Hudson Bay watersheds involved frequent, heavy portaging between innumerable small lakes and rivers over boggy ground. The exigencies of the land necessitated recourse to the lighter outfit of older days—the canoe, paddle, and tump line—rather than the large, gasoline-powered boats, towing scows full of supplies, more common to that era. Every year, his journals use explicitly martial language to describe the preparation and execution of his fieldwork. Once both animate bodies and inanimate equipment had been trimmed down to "fighting weight," they journeyed through country that Blanchet characterized as recalcitrant, particularly at the watershed, where rivers could flow in a confusing variety of directions.[40] "We have been fighting this height of land hard and getting so little for it and failure would be so awfully disappointing," he wrote after one particularly frustrating day.[41]

However, he greatly enjoyed strenuous travel, and gained ample satisfaction from being able to navigate through difficult landscapes. Looking back on his 1926 trip, "a hard one through difficult country," he averred that "we fought it without regard to obstacles." His compensation for such struggles was the astonishing beauty of the Barrenlands in high summer, as described in vivid technicolour in his journals and reports. The view was "a pleasing one of gently undulating to moderately rolling country well covered with shrubs and moss on the slopes and grass in the bottoms, colouring it a vivid green. … After the first frosts have come, a still more striking effect is produced by great splashes of crimson and yellow of the saxifrage, labrador tea and blueberry bush."[42]

In undertaking this work, which doubled as a kind of leisure, Blanchet was fulfilling a deep-seated need for manly testing that the modern world seemed no longer to offer. One strand of antimodernism, in reaction to this civilized ennui, exhorted a martial, activist cult of experience, often identified with outdoor exercise. Such activity served as an antidote to excessive mental work and provided a taste of preindustrial vigour.[43] In Canada, the northern wilderness was the paradigmatic *topos* in which to realize the strenuous life. The more immersed Blanchet became in his travels there, the less appealing did aspects of his normal life appear. Echoing the concerns of critics of overcivilization, he decried the negative effects of office work and urban habitation. Life in Ottawa came to seem confining and constraining: "I can only stand so much of it and then would burst in some way if I didn't get out."[44] By contrast, life in the field was "a life for a man everyday a fight and always facing decisions."[45]

The mention of decisiveness is not incidental. A prominent fear connected to overcivilization was that the thickened social webs characteristic of modern life made it more difficult for a person to take independent steps to shape his or her own fate. In defence of individual autonomy, activist antimodernism celebrated the ability to act decisively.[46] This quality inhered in Blanchet's primary maxim of northern fieldwork: "Make up your mind. Don't stand on one foot: do whatever you think best, but *do* it."[47] This stress on active mental engagement can also be traced back to the core driver of antimodernist sentiment, the longing for regeneration through intense physical and mental experience. The two kinds of challenge were linked: "In spite of all that goes to make up this life it is a good one. You enter soft finicky loving ease + pleasant things and for a while

it pounds and bruises you but you emerge with muscles + nerves steeled with the primitive capacity of being able to meet and conquer your difficulties instead of passing them on to some paid agency."[48]

Not only Blanchet's body, but also his mind found a welcome challenge in "stepping off the map" each summer. This phrase, written near the beginning of most of his journals, seems to have symbolized his entry into what he considered "unknown"—and, in an antimodern sense, mentally therapeutic—northern space.[49] Blanchet's journals often contrasted "known" and "unknown" space, invariably favouring the latter. Travelling familiar roads produced lethargy rather than contentment. Mental alertness, by contrast, was linked to the traverse of unknown trails: "It is life after all when you leave the beaten paths and eddys and strike out into any new thing physical mental or moral."[50] While living among urban crowds dulled sensation and emotion, Blanchet found that his fieldwork rendered him newly observant and sensitive. He relished seeing and studying new things, and hoped to discover something completely unknown to his society.[51]

## The Primitive North

Entwined with these active, martial, and masculine ideas were those of a related notion: that of the primitive or "Indian." The primitivist discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries overflowed with tropes expressing a variety of things about Indigenous peoples real and imaginary, past and present. Blanchet simultaneously sought to acquire and emulate aspects of Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing while maintaining that such peoples were degenerating, and he was not alone in holding such competing views. His doubts regarding the necessarily positive nature of progress, along with his perceptions of the dangers of overcivilization, led him, as it did many others in that era, to play at being an Indian.[52] As Robert Berkhofer notes, non-Indigenous constructions of Indigeneity often arise out of Euro-American impulses to expose and correct the perceived shortcomings of their own societies.[53] By temporarily inhabiting what he conceived as the skin of the Other, Blanchet was able to jettison the aspects of civilization he disliked. Following the classic arc of antimodern feeling, he then drew upon appealing aspects of "primitive" culture in order to regenerate his body and spirit.

However, Blanchet located most of these admirable traits in the lives and cultures of historical northern Indigenous peoples, whom he distinguished from their physically and morally "degenerate" descendants of the 1920s. The notion of the physically or culturally vanishing Indian was the predominant non-Indigenous interpretation of Indigenous peoples on the North American continent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like many of his southern Canadian contemporaries with some experience of northern life, Blanchet considered that Indigenous peoples of that region had fallen prey to the comforts of civilized life at fur trade posts. As trappers dependent on southern goods and prices, they seemed to Euro-Canadian onlookers mere shadows of the independent and virile hunters they had been in former days. Considering Blanchet's avid self-identification with primitive peoples, it was both ironic and rather fitting that he quickly came to be regarded, and to regard himself, as one of another vanishing kind: heroic northern explorers of the pre-industrial age.

Blanchet's Barrenland surveys gave him both the inspiration and the opportunity to incorporate some self-consciously primitive aspects into his conduct of fieldwork. By the mid-1920s, he had developed a "hard" style of northern travel, a significant feature of which was the evanescence of his outfit. He presented this choice as both localized and normative in one article: "There is a general principle when travelling in the North that the less baggage you have, the farther you may go. Moreover, if you know the country and where and how to hunt and fish, there is not much danger of shortage in summer, when living off the country. … If one wishes to go far, he must go light."[54] Before departing for the summer, Blanchet would cut and recut items from his slim list of supplies: "The final trimming of the cargo, in clearing the paddling places [in the canoe], generally resulted in the sacrifice of a sack of flour or bacon."[55] He would also shed food along the trail if indications of game in an area looked good and if he wished to lessen the number of time-consuming portages necessary to move forward.[56] His luck in finding game held throughout these summers, and he looked back on "blue" or starving periods with fondness: "Home again in the base camp after 11 days of wandering on 4 days grub after all in retrospect I find we were very lucky and lived well. We … had no hard times and fish came at the critical times."[57]

Blanchet affected a disinterest in food generally while in the field, presumably related to his desire for a slim physique. The only relish he

obtained in gustatory matters was the sense of achievement that accompanied the active, martial filling of the meat pot.[58] He went so far as to flirt mentally with the idea of starvation: "I really in the back of my mind wouldn't mind if we had to starve a little to see what the mental reaction would be."[59] In this thought, Blanchet mirrored the intrigue of martial antimodernists with ideas of pain and suffering, which they considered had been largely excised from modern life through analgesic advances in medicine. Encounters with these states of being were yet another way of warding off overcivilization; they proved that the modern body could still handle and overcome physical adversity.[60] Blanchet admitted that, strangely, he loved travel most when it was studded with hardship: "I like better to suffer on the trail for the interest of it."[61]

Blanchet's first foray into the Barren Grounds occurred in the late summer of 1923. He was accompanied by Joseph King "Souci" Beaulieu (1858–1929), a Métis man with ancestral ties to several Dene communities, and "Black" Basile, a Yellowknives Dene (T'satsąot'ınę) man. Blanchet identified them both as Chipewyan.[62] Blanchet had travelled with Indigenous guides before, but this particular encounter seems to have had an important effect on his subsequent work in the Barrens, which was largely independent of Indigenous assistance. More a reconnaissance trip than an exploratory survey proper, it gave him a model of the primitive past to follow in subsequent journeys, and revealed to him the "decay" that he believed contact with civilization had effected among the Denesuline.

Blanchet told the story of their journey as follows: he had been laying out what he considered minimum supplies for a month when Souci halted him.[63] "What for we carry store food to country where meat abounds?" he reportedly exclaimed. Blanchet came to agree: "At least we should experience life there as did the Indians in the old days. As with them, it might be feasting or there might be times of famine." Their party had both times of plenty, marked by the constant hunting and eating of caribou, and of scarcity, when, in three days' travel, they were only able to catch two fish. Significantly, Souci and Basile were both older men. When Blanchet had inquired after younger guides, the manager of the trading post at Resolution had replied that the young men had no knowledge of the country and preferred to loaf in the settlement during the summer. Blanchet's companions are presented as relics of an earlier age when Denesuline families had travelled more widely over the Barrens to hunt caribou and the rarer,

more elusive musk ox. Their journey in 1923 was portrayed as a last, sentimental visit to the land of Souci's and Basile's youthful days, "across the old forgotten hunting grounds of the people where the tent stones of the encampment were almost buried in moss." Similar themes of romanticized, ancient Indigeneity and the presumed degeneracy of then-present Denesuline appear throughout the journals and published narratives that describe the following three years of Blanchet's fieldwork in the Barrens.

Blanchet framed the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, through which his party passed into the Barrens, as a portal to a primitive world of the past.[64] The environment of the Barrens, mirroring the traits of the humans who lived there, appeared to Blanchet to be in the "early stages of natural development."[65] This emphasis on the "long ago and far away" was a key element of primitivist discourse.[66] One of the characteristic ways in which Blanchet deployed this theme was in his constant observation of traces, both ancient and recent, of Indigenous peoples on the land. These relics—old tent poles and stones, arrowheads, spearheads, piles of kindling, scraped caribou bones—signified the permanently anterior nature of the landscape, in which lives had been most vigorously lived in the distant past. From this scant evidence, Blanchet imagined possible actions for these ghosts:

> The trail of the people becomes fainter and fainter … at one portage their trail was made very human by finding a toy boat whittled out of a stick and one pictured some little brown tot caribou grease to the ears sailing it in the eddy below the falls much as Christopher Robin might be sailing his in the Serpentine and another place—a winter camp of long ago where they made canoes for the spring caribou hunt I saw where the comely squaw of one of the tribe had got a scolding for leaving her awl mounted in a piece of caribou horn.[67]

By conceiving of this environment as a natural and human exemplar of the primitive past, Blanchet indulged his own primitivist wishes to live and travel in such an era and fashion. Not only was he vigilant about recording the remains of old campsites and hunting passes that he encountered, but he also chose sometimes to camp at those places. In motions imbued

Fig. 5.2: Basile (left) and Joseph King "Souci" Beaulieu (right) in the summer of 1923. Image J-00324, courtesy of Janet Blanchet and the BC Archives, Royal British Columbia Museum. Cropped from original photograph.

with practical and romantic sentiment, he retraced and re-enacted past Indigenous journeys over portages and routes, both those still frequented and those that had fallen into disuse. At times, he identified very closely with these bygone actors. One afternoon in the summer of 1925, having shot a moose that he subsequently butchered and hung to dry on wooden racks, Blanchet broached their party's similarity to a "party of Indians," and reflected on the joys of living the "Indian life."[68]

These traces were not evenly distributed across the land of Blanchet's travels, and their patterns suggested social and moral judgments. As they travelled further into the heart of the Barrens, recent signs of Indigenous life gave way to much older traces of people long dead. Blanchet read these latter inscriptions, especially those on the cusp of the old musk ox hunting ranges, as evidence of "the old days when the men were more hardy and adventurous."[69] He interpreted the withdrawal of then-present Denesuline from their former hunting grounds and their loss of knowledge of that region as a mark of decline.[70] This assessment seemed to be confirmed by his interactions with the Dene whom he did meet. At the end of July 1925, his party encountered two large families within one day, both travelling east to meet the caribou migration. When he asked them for information about the country in that direction, the young men of the first group could not reply. An elderly woman named "Soongo," however, became very excited, and indicated that she knew that area well. She could even describe it recognizably, as she had travelled there as a young girl. An elderly man in the second family was similarly well-informed. Blanchet concluded that "the old and blind among the Indians have had more varied experiences, as their lives reach back to the primitive adventurous life of their people, and in thinking over the travel of their early days they keep these routes and landmarks fresh in their minds."[71]

Variations on the same bleak assessment of the Barren Ground Dene run throughout Blanchet's publications of the 1920s. He presents these people not only as barely possessing knowledge about the regions they frequented, but also as fearful of the dangers that lurked there, such as starvation, disappearance, supernatural beings, or conflict with Inuit.[72] Their withdrawal from the Barrens, Blanchet proposed, meant that "life has become for them simpler and more secure, but the change has been accompanied by a certain physical and moral decay. They lack the courage to attempt a long and difficult trip and the stamina to accomplish it."[73]

With such statements, Blanchet used the Denesuline as foils for his own active, martial engagement with their traditional territories. Whereas such people, in Blanchet's view, always selected the easiest route of travel, magnified small obstacles, and could hardly conceive of steady, persistent effort, his own arduous ethic of work and travel, his choice of challenging, sometimes little-travelled routes, and his overall knowledge of the landscape rendered him, it is implied, more "Indian" than northern Indigenous peoples themselves.[74]

The respect accorded to Blanchet's overtly difficult, masculine, and primitive travels waned with the appearance of new technologies of travel in the north. As early as 1929, Blanchet felt himself set apart from the young Euro-Canadian men of the new industrial and airborne age who surrounded him at Tavane. Their easy acceptance of their own dependence on machines would, he believed, lead to the same physical and mental decay that he had always fled to the north to combat: "Some of my trips … demanded all you could give that the youths of today would not attempt without the moral support of gasoline."[75] He continued to believe in the necessity of an activist and martial masculinity to ward off overcivilization, but increasingly perceived that this fight was being lost—or, worse, not even being taken up—by his successors in arctic fieldwork. The weakening effects of modern life that Blanchet had tried to stave off throughout the 1920s seemed to have come to Euro-Canadian sojourners, as well as Indigenous peoples of the north, at last.

## The Leisurely North

George Douglas' northern travels, like those of his friend Blanchet, arose from the strand of antimodernism known as the back-to-nature movement. Yet his actions were informed by a different engagement with nature, and were coloured by quite distinct motivations and emotions that require some situation in Douglas' unique life and personality. While Blanchet had always lived in cities or towns and encountered extra-urban environments as a visitor, Douglas had long been a resident of Ontario's Kawartha Lakes district, a focal point for back-to-nature enthusiasts since the late nineteenth century.[76] Growing up on Northcote Farm, situated on Katchewanooka Lake just north of the town of Lakefield, he became an

expert canoeist and boatsman who travelled the Kawartha Lakes and the Trent-Severn Waterway often and widely, in all kinds of crafts.

Throughout the interwar era, he returned frequently to Northcote Farm between stints of work in Arizona and Mexico. He owned a smattering of properties on adjoining lakes, which sported shelters ranging from furnished cabins to tents on bare rock, and he moved easily and frequently between these on foot and by canoe, bicycle, and skis—but rarely by car. Douglas' northern expeditions were not vigorous respites from a sedentary urban lifestyle, as were Blanchet's, but rather a natural extension of an unusually active life lived outdoors, often under less than comfortable circumstances, by choice. They were a restorative and therapeutic kind of antimodern leisure even so, given that Douglas' career in arid climes afforded him few opportunities to spend time in a canoe or boat.

Unlike Blanchet, Douglas did not use his time in the north to shore up his sense of masculinity, and he was not captivated by real or imagined Indigenous lifestyles or cultures. But his private reaction to modernity involved a similar sense of alienation from the present predicated upon a longing for types of physical and spiritual experiences found predominantly in the past. His letters, diaries, and *aide-mémoires* throughout the 1920s and 1930s, written in the field and following journeys there, display a persistent nostalgia for and a precise remembrance of his previous northern endeavours. For him, past and present mingled to form a personal northern temporality tied to discrete spaces occupied by the same few beloved sites and traces.[77] His gradual loss of control over his movements and equipment, and thereby his experience of time and space, is mirrored by his representation of the disturbance and destruction of this familiar northern timescape, to which the chronicles of his later trips bear witness.

Because Douglas' antimodern sentiments were yoked so strongly to his personal history in the north, it is important to know something of his first and most celebrated trip there. In 1911, James Douglas sponsored George, his brother Lionel, and the geologist August Sandberg in their search for copper deposits around Great Bear Lake and in the Coppermine region. From Edmonton, the three men travelled to Waterways in northern Alberta, and thence down the Mackenzie River to Fort Norman, where they tracked up the Bear River to Great Bear Lake. They sailed across the lake to its northeasterly corner, where they overwintered. Both that autumn and the next spring, Douglas travelled northeast to the Coppermine

River, which he followed on the latter trip all the way to the Arctic Ocean. Douglas was an excellent photographer, and published some of the earliest photographs of this region in his book-length narrative of this journey, *Lands Forlorn* (1914).

Proper order and forethought were essential to Douglas' comfort and success as a northern traveller. His first expedition was a model trip in that regard. Over the winter of 1910–11, Douglas assiduously researched the environmental and geographical conditions of Great Bear Lake and the Coppermine region. He assembled what he considered to be the ideal outfit, which centered on two canoes that the Peterborough Canoe Company built precisely to his specifications. "I want to give the building of the canoes my supervision + a thoroughly practical trial, afloat, in swift water + on ice," George wrote to James. "Such elaborate attention to detail might be thought hardly necessary but … the more carefully preparations are made and equipment tested out the most sure we are of results."[78] Writing after their trial trip to the Coppermine in the autumn of 1911, Douglas averred that "only the perfection of our equipment pulled us through."[79]

Douglas' methodical approach served him even better as he prepared for his prospecting trips of the 1920s and 1930s. Whereas large mining exploration companies like Domex, N.A.M.E., and their successors of the mid-1930s could afford to fly men out to many different sites in one summer to search for profitable mineralization, this style of fieldwork was quite expensive. When exploring for various American and Canadian mining companies and investors, Douglas preferred to work with smaller budgets. He believed them a fairer investment, given the likelihood that a season's prospecting would yield no valuable result. He also chose to prospect principally by canoe and outboard motor, which restricted him to a relatively small area of operation each summer. In the preceding months, he would pore over geological reports, historical narratives, aerial photographs, and photostat maps to find segments around the great northern lakes with a number of promising outcrops, and that were close enough together to visit in a single intense season of fieldwork.

So much Douglas had control over, but the factors that he could not regulate intruded increasingly upon his leisurely antimodern experiences in the interwar north. To begin, he could not determine the time or manner of his return to the northern lakes. His 1928 trip was intended to be the first in a series of multi-year investigations that never came to pass,

for want of money and interest on the part of his investor. The expedition he proposed to lead for Domex in the summer of 1930, for which he had high hopes, was also shelved.[80] Despite his careful selection of sites to investigate, his field seasons, particularly the last two, were unsuccessful. The wasted time, effort, and money put into such endeavours frustrated him greatly. But what disheartened Douglas most were the environmental perturbations brought about by increased interest in the mineral potential of the Northwest Territories. These changes for the worse heightened Douglas' sense of nostalgia for and recourse to his cherished memories of his early expeditions to Great Bear and Great Slave lakes.

## The Timeful North

In an insightful essay about the relations between time, modernity, and nostalgia, Kim Sawchuk defines this last state as "a melancholia caused by a protracted absence, a wistful, excessively sentimental and even abnormal hankering for the return of some real or romanticized period or irrecoverable condition or setting in the past." She argues that nostalgia may be regarded as a subconscious reaction to new understandings of space and especially time that emerged around the turn of the century, particularly the Western standardization of time in the 1880s. Noting that nostalgia may be "unintentionally demeaned because of [its] association with the feminine, which is itself associated with irrationality and sentimentality," Sawchuk wonders if this negativity might be replaced with a positive valuation of nostalgia, "a step towards a remembrance of things past, towards a history that includes the senses, a history of home and hearth." By refusing nostalgia, conversely, "we are … hardened against feeling both the losses in our lives and the changes within our society and culture that are not of our making but that are in the interests of those classes who benefit from the ideology of unrestrained progress."[81]

This commentary provides an excellent context for the unique spatial and temporal mapping of Douglas' nostalgia across the north, as revealed in his sentimental attachments to the items he had used, the places he had camped, and the paths he had travelled while there. They also help to explain the disjuncture between Douglas' occupational identity, which purportedly favoured the rapid development of northern resources, and

his private concern over the rate and extent of industrial activity in the north during the 1930s. The twin processes of an evolving northern industrial presence and the devolving of Douglas' control over his northern surroundings may best be understood by perusing his trips of the interwar period in sequence.

Douglas' second trip to the north occurred in 1928, seventeen years after he had first visited the region. Sponsored by the United Verde Copper Company, he and the prospector Carl Lausen made the first geological investigation of Great Slave Lake's southeastern shores. They focused on the territory between Charlton Bay and Stark Lake, and searched particularly for evidence of copper basalt flows. As in 1911–12, Douglas retained full control over his equipment and the rate and means of his travel. He elected to travel north from Waterways by canoe and outboard motor instead of booking passage on a steamship, which was then the choice of most travellers. Douglas wished to introduce his inexperienced companion to travelling by canoe. He also enjoyed the deliberately slow pace of travel, which enabled excellent views of familiar settlements and well-remembered landmarks on the Slave and Mackenzie rivers. On this trip, he established a base of operations on Eagle Island, located about ten miles northeast of the mouth of the Taltson River on Great Slave Lake, to which he would subsequently return.

Recounting the summer's work in an address to the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, Douglas exhibited his punctilious attitude toward orderly provisions and preparation by describing and justifying their outfit in minute detail. He also noted the escalating contrast between old and new methods of subarctic fieldwork, as exemplified by other expeditions to the Great Slave Lake area that summer. H. S. Wilson and his party, working for the Nipissing Mines Company, had made a long, traditional overland trip between Great Slave Lake and Hudson Bay, using the Thelon-Hanbury river system to travel across the Barrens. They had "depended on nothing but their own strength, unaided by any later mechanical inventions such as out-board engines and aeroplanes," Douglas reported. Meanwhile, N.A.M.E. had also done extensive work "with its utilization of aeroplanes to an extent and on a scale never attempted before in prospecting."[82] Douglas experienced both these styles of travel in his next two trips, which took place in 1932.

That March, Douglas made a quick, secretive trip by airplane from Edmonton to Great Bear Lake in order to stake some coal deposits that he had noticed on Douglas Bay twenty years earlier, and which Gilbert LaBine's recent finding of pitchblende nearby might render commercially important. Although both Domex and N.A.M.E. had pressured Douglas to reveal the location of these deposits, he staked them for the Sudbury Diamond Drilling Company.[83] Even at this early time of the year, he was one of approximately thirty prospectors heading to Great Bear Lake, and his plane was one of nine either in operation or soon to be so, all in support of prospecting and mining activities.[84] While flying was novel to Douglas, his experiences on the ground were not dissimilar to his past ones there. Writing to Lionel, he affirmed that it felt like he had never been away from the north. Neither certain people, nor certain sights, nor even the taste of the excellent bacon, eggs, and scones in Mason's restaurant at McMurray seemed to have altered.[85]

Douglas' sense of déjà vu grew stronger that summer when he returned to Great Bear Lake once more, this time to investigate his wintertime stakings more carefully, and to examine the south shore of the Keith Arm for float coal. In his unpublished memoir of the summer, Douglas used one of his favourite literary constructions, which juxtaposed with precision his past and present experiences of exact points in the landscape:

> We … passed through the narrow channel in the lake just as we had done in the "Jupiter" twenty one years before, almost to the day. … We were now in well-remembered waters. On July 18th, 1912, twenty years before … we had entered this bay in the "Aldebaran" on our homeward voyage from the Dease River. … Now on July 17th 1932, in the "Alcyone," I ran along the same shore into the same beautiful bay, and came alongside at the same camping place.[86]

Their campsite from 1912 at Russel Bay, on the west side of Keith Arm, had not been disturbed. The stake to which they had formerly tied the "Aldebaran" still stood near the water, and their cut and stacked firewood from two decades before lit their fire that very night. The place seemed hardly to have changed, partly because the aridity of the lacustrine

micro-climate slowed material decay.[87] Neither the extinguished logs of their old campfire nor the boughs that had comprised Douglas' bed of brush looked more than one or two years old: "It was indeed a strange experience to return to this well remembered camp, and find the traces we had left so little changed, while such momentous changes had taken place in the great world without, these frail branches of spruce had outlasted human empires and systems of civilization."[88] Exploring along the shoreline, Douglas discovered many anthropogenic scoriations, the most recent of which was far older—perhaps nearly a century—than their own traces of twenty years before. He conjectured that these had been made by the parties of John Franklin, Peter Warren Dease, Thomas Simpson, and John Richardson, all of whom had travelled along that coast in the first half of the nineteenth century. He delighted not only in his immersion in history, but also in the sensory delights of the lake—"the 'barren ground' conditions with its freshness and exhilaration, its scented atmosphere, its uninterrupted vision, the ease of walking and freedom of movement…."[89]

The summers of 1928 and 1932 had been relatively idyllic, if mostly unproductive in their results. Douglas returned to both great lakes of the north in 1935. With funding from a group of New York investors, he and his partner Bobby Jones sought out silver and copper on the southeastern shore of Great Slave Lake. Meanwhile, the other members of his team, Blanchet and a prospector named René Hansen, searched for gold near Beaverlodge and in the region adjacent to the north shore of Lake Athabasca. In 1934, coarse gold had been found in the latter area, sparking a rush parallel to the one then underway at Yellowknife. Douglas believed that the geological formation in which this discovery had been made might extend a good way north and northeast of Lake Athabasca, into unstaked ground.[90] The team of four also reduced the coal claim Douglas had staked three years prior at Douglas Bay on Great Bear Lake. In order to select the boundaries of the reduced claim, the ground of the original claim had to be traversed again and observed carefully. This smaller claim then had to be surveyed and staked according to federal mining regulations. Douglas, Blanchet, and the others spent nearly a week cutting lines through the bush along the claim's boundaries, running surveying chains down those lines, and digging pits three feet deep in the frozen ground to place iron posts at the corners of the claim.[91]

For the first time, discord and distress tinged Douglas' remembrances of the past and descriptions of the present. The summer's complicated schedule of fieldwork ranging across the north relied heavily upon the timetables of other people, particularly those of the pilots moving them from place to place. Not all of Douglas' coworkers met his exacting standards, or even proved congenial company. As he wrote to Lionel, it was "really a very lonely summer. Bobby was all right but terribly limited + ignorant while Blanchet with all his good qualities was not a pleasant travelling companion."[92] In troubling contrast to previous expeditions, Douglas did not have complete control over all aspects of his fieldwork. He was relieved at summer's close to return to Eagle Island and to find his beloved canoes safely stowed where he had unwillingly been forced to leave them for most of the season.

Eagle Island and its environs proved to be that summer's happiest haven of memories, which Douglas experienced in a manner reminiscent of his re-encounter with Great Bear Lake in 1932. His arrival after six weeks of fieldwork "to this beautiful and now familiar place was almost like coming home." Eagle Island was actually two islands, half a mile long altogether, separated by a narrow, shallow channel. The more westerly island was low, level, and well-covered with spruce, and the easterly was higher, rounded, and rather bare, revealing the purplish-brown quartzite from which the island was fashioned. A little bay made a perfect anchorage for Douglas' canoe, and a thickly wooded glade sheltered the boat he had had to cache. Douglas delighted in setting up his tent in a flat, sandy spot, and constructing a makeshift kitchen atop some smooth rocks. At a nearby camp they revisited, the traces of Douglas and Lausen's presence in 1928 were "unexpectedly fresh and recent." Their campsite's half-burned logs seemed "no more than a few weeks old." A stack of chopped wood, an old packing case, and, most gratifyingly, cans of gasoline and oil lay there undisturbed, ready to serve again as they had done seven years ago. The entire site was pristine, unmarred by any other signs of recent life.[93]

This feeling of stopped or slowed time had been even stronger upon Douglas' arrival, earlier that summer, at Douglas Bay on Great Bear Lake: "It was a curious and overpowering experience to find myself suddenly transported back to this familiar spot. There was nothing to indicate the passage of time: I felt as though I had never been away from the place…." But difference soon became apparent; the happy illusion was dashed.

Fig. 5.3: Eagle Island in the summer of 1935 (detail). The remains of Douglas' camp from 1928, including the packing case and cans of gasoline mentioned, are visible in the background directly above the "Ivaha" and in the foreground to its left. Photo: George Douglas. Library and Archives Canada, MG 30 B95, vol. 5, file 2, reproduction copy no. e011093048.

Douglas' cache of supplies from 1932 had been robbed, a thing that had never before happened to him in the north. It seemed a direct consequence of the changes in that region: "No Indian had done this…. Some of the low-down whites brought into the country by the 'Bear Lake Rush' had been guilty of this robbery." The accompanying destruction had been selfish and wanton: cans of gasoline were deliberately split with axes to prevent others from using their stores, and the floorboards of the little cabin nearby had been completely riven in search of hidden valuables.[94]

A less shocking but still dispiriting experience was their survey of the reduced area of the coal claim, situated as it was in the densest of landscapes. Douglas described it as "an impenetrable forest of the thickest and toughest willows … ever seen; a difficult country to walk over, covered with thick moss and tangled dwarf birch."[95] They spent nearly a week struggling with, bending over, standing on, and finally cutting

down willows in order to run the boundary line for the claim over hills and through gullies. Their campsite provided neither peace nor respite for Douglas, who was appalled by its disorganization. For the first time, his familiar mental initiation of the comparison between past and present revealed a depressing decline in his circumstances:

> My thoughts turned regretfully to my previous camp in this same place, and the contrast it made with our present camp. Then we had a perfect, fairly light weight outfit. … We had the best of food and plenty of everything…. We were working hard, but not under the same pressure of limited time. There were only two of us, and perfect unanimity of opinion on matters of order and system in camp. … Contrast this with our present situation: confined to the shore, committed to the completion of a heavy job in limited time; dearth of game and faced with acute food shortage; and lastly, instead of a well-ordered camp, what I may describe as the sloppiest and worst run camp I ever had anything to do with in the far north.[96]

This charting of decline was one of two striking similarities between this trip and Douglas' last trip north in 1938, on which occasion he again did not have the luxury of using his own equipment. The other was the forceful appearance of industrialization, in the shape of the mines and mining camps that he saw being constructed on Cameron Bay in 1935 and Yellowknife Bay in 1938. The latter rose, quite literally and to Douglas' amazement, in the four weeks between two of his visits there. A "helter-skelter, hodge-podge city" had replaced the tents.[97] Despite his own participation in mining exploration, he felt distinctly uncomfortable watching the full-fledged apparatus of his profession come to the shores of his beloved northern Canadian lakes. The mining complex at Cameron Bay seemed "out of place, sordid, and discordant."[98] Walking around the Consolidated mine at Yellowknife three years later, he considered that it had "a good layout," but that it was "strange + depressing to see in this country."[99]

Supported by a small syndicate and assisted on the ground by René Hansen and another prospector named Tom Greenfield, Douglas spent his last summer in the north investigating the country at the headwaters

Fig. 5.4: George Douglas at Boulder Point, on Douglas Bay in Great Bear Lake, in the summer of 1935 (detail). He had camped at the same spot during the summer of 1932. Library and Archives Canada, MG 30 B95, vol. 5, file 2, reproduction copy no. e011093047.

of the Thubun River, southeast of Great Slave Lake. There, the three men searched for mineralization along a greenstone belt that hugged the lake's southern shore. A subsequent trip to the lake's North Arm, where more recent gold discoveries had stoked another wave of investment in prospecting, proved "a complete fizzle, a deplorable waste of time, effort, and money."[100] The country around the settlement of Rae, and around Slemon and Russell lakes and Snare River was already saturated with stakings. Douglas sent Hansen and Greenfield by plane to undertake six weeks' exploratory work in the country surrounding Nonacho Lake. Meanwhile, he made a slow, solitary circuit of the eastern and northern shores of Great Slave Lake, stopping to observe certain sites more closely, but otherwise making a farewell tour of his favourite northern people and places.

Upon his last visit to Eagle Island, his own traces, which once had seemed inviolate, were starting to smudge with the increased traffic around Great Slave Lake: "I was surprised to find nothing at our old [1928] camp had been touched. Dr. Lausen's + my old fire looked exactly as it had done when I saw it last (1935). … My old windbreak still in fair shape also

the table + big block of wood. But some Indians had had a winter camp at the head of the Pahie dock + the place looked generally used up."[101] The site's consumption mirrored physiological changes occurring inside of his own body, which had felt increasingly tired, old, and even pained on his last two northern journeys.[102] After returning to Ontario that autumn, aged 63, he retired from northern work altogether.

Throughout the years before and after the First World War, the combination of a favourable climate for preservation, an Indigenous respect for property, and a low population density produced pockets of northern space in which time seemed to move more slowly than in the rest of Douglas' world. In these nostalgic microspaces, things were invested with emotional significance far beyond their quotidian usage through their elevation to "relics," as Douglas termed them.[103] He did so half-humorously, perhaps in order to soften the impression one receives from his unpublished writings—that these were indeed precious, valuable objects to him, redolent of all the sacral connotations of the word, constitutive of a private northern reliquary that held the happiness of his past doings. Relics, like other kinds of ruins, can act as coherent, unified expressions of "all the uncertainties of change in time and the tragedy of loss associated with the past."[104]

While the remnants of campfires and brush beds evoked strong memories in Douglas, the survival of still-useful components of this memorial assemblage allowed the instant bridging of past and present, as though all the time he had spent away from the north had never been. Yet his constant self-insertion into a time that, for everyone else, was quickly ending if not already gone altogether, eventually rendered him as much a relic as the items clustered around him at familiar campsites. Left over from an earlier era of the north, like his friend Blanchet, Douglas felt and mourned its passage, commemorated it as long as he was able to do so, and finally left his traces behind for the last time.

## The Royal Road to the North

The experience of time and space in the north underwent a stunning reversal in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. The felt, lived gap between the past and future north, into which Douglas and Blanchet found themselves slipping, was the consequence of a sudden rush in modernization

brought about particularly by the introduction and quick uptake of the bush plane. Personal encounters with this means of conveyance gave Blanchet and Douglas a chance to reflect on the past, the present, and the future, and the methods of knowing the north that seemed allied to each of these ages. The airplane might be, in Blanchet's phrase, the royal road to the north.[105] But to where did that road ultimately lead? Both men saw the advantages and disadvantages of the methods they had championed, as well as those that new technologies were conferring upon the next generation of fieldworkers.

The airplane solved problems of knowledge, access, and recovery endemic to the north, which had hindered the development, longed for by government and industry alike, of that region's natural resources. It resolved the "paradox presented by a land that was, on the one hand, a source of potential wealth and, simultaneously, an obstacle to exploiting that wealth."[106] As Blanchet observed, the tradition of tough overland surveys stretching back to Samuel Hearne was reaching the limit of its usefulness.[107] At the rate of work then current in the 1920s, it would have taken more than a century to map northern Canada completely using terrestrial methods alone, according to one estimate.[108]

The airplane enabled the comparatively more cost-effective method of aerial surveying, which Marionne Cronin terms "a constellation of techniques clustered around the use of aircraft to acquire information about the country's geography and geology."[109] One such technique was simple aerial reconnaissance of the kind Blanchet had undertaken near Hudson Bay, where a surveyor observed the ground whilst flying and made notes and drawings as he did so. Aerial photography allowed the capture of landscapes from above, using the oblique method that had proved most suited to the northern Canadian environment.[110] Access to northern sites was also eased, as airplanes permitted institutions and companies to deploy teams of fieldworkers with less individual investment of time and money. These craft could move surveyors or prospectors between a series of pre-determined sites at scheduled times, drop supplies and mail to these parties throughout the summer, and then pick them up at the close of the season. Finally, the airplane facilitated the transportation of large quantities of equipment, supplies, and minerals from field sites in the north to southern industrial hubs in Canada or the United States, and

thereby overcame the main limiting factor on the development of a northern mining industry.

Given the many aspects of life and work that the airplane ameliorated in the region, it was no wonder that between the wars, "the vision of a vibrant and prosperous North emerged as the centrepiece of air-mindedness in Canada."[111] In the 1930s, the airplane became as central to northern life as it remained peripheral everywhere else in Canada. Northern planes played an essential role in the new networks of transportation that enabled the twentieth-century industrialization of the Canadian Subarctic and Arctic. Workers, materials, and capital regularly moved by air between new northern towns and mining camps, such as Cameron Bay on Great Bear Lake and Yellowknife on Great Slave Lake, and southern centres of production and consumption.

The airplane's compression of time and space would have had a larger relative impact in the north than elsewhere anyway, given the much greater distances and much harsher ground conditions that invariably separated settlements there. What surprised southern visitors to the region most was the ease and speed with which northerners adapted to the collapse of time and distance, the casualness with which they spoke about places five hundred or a thousand miles away as though they were just around the corner.[112] If the north had once been the place where time passed most slowly in Canada, in the space of just a few years it had become the place where hours flew by at their quickest. As if to express this revolution, the juxtaposition of old and new technologies of travel, such as dog teams and airplanes, became the most popular and important visual and literary trope in representations of the north in the late 1920s and 1930s.[113]

Technologies of motion, as Sidonie Smith notes, have the potential to reorder many aspects of travellers' lives, including the narratives they tell, the evidence of their five senses, their relationships pertaining to gender, class, and race, and their perceptions of time and space.[114] Douglas and Blanchet were acutely aware that exploration by airplane had certain drawbacks, particularly in terms of how it positioned travellers differently within time and space. Douglas worried that the airplane's rapid movement over territory traversed much more slowly by travellers on the ground produced brief, superficial encounters that distorted the vagaries of the actual landscape:

> It looks so darned easy when you are flying—it makes for erroneous conclusions. The sense of proportion is lost, and even worse than that such important things as common sense seem to lose their significance when travelling at height and speed. … It is a tool requiring discrimination and knowledge. The important things are thought and sight, and there is always more to see than you can take in no matter how slowly and carefully you go. As for sweeping over the country at two or three thousand feet above it and at a rate of 150 miles an hour—So far as learning anything about it you would do better to sit at home and study a map.[115]

Douglas' concerns touched not only upon the compression of the present, but also upon the degradation or severance of relationships between past and present times. Before the airplane's advent, northern travellers had regarded, and many continued to regard, the records and travelogues of their peregrinatory predecessors as invaluable resources. By contrast, Douglas found that some pilots espoused a cavalier neglect of the region's history of exploration; they were ignorant of great funds of information that might have been useful to them.[116]

Douglas' friend and fellow traveller P. G. Downes once commented that air travel gave one's experience of the north a "chattering and particularly inhuman" quality.[117] It was this inhumanity that Douglas and Blanchet deplored in the airplane's distancing of the traveller from the living landscape, human and non-human, below. Travelling at great heights and speeds in a sealed "metallic carapace" bore no resemblance to the "visceral mobility" of travelling by canoe and foot.[118] The aerial camera might allow the complete and accurate mapping of northern waterways, but muted the intimate details of the land, such as its soil, timber, and minor topographical features. This fear of lost intimacy runs throughout Blanchet's writings on the airplane, and extends to the experiences of the inhabitants as well as features of the land: "Much is gained by the wide view of the aerial camera but something is lost, matters important to those who dwell there."[119]

Those matters were also pertinent, if less so, to those passing through the region. Both Blanchet and Douglas agreed that to fly was to sacrifice much of the inherent interest of northern travel: the joy of flexing and

pushing one's muscles to their limit, the immersion in vibrant sights, smells, and sounds, and the chance meetings with others in lonely spaces that provided social, mental, and physical nourishment. One of the greatest pleasures they took in flight was the ability to pass over familiar, hard-travelled ground and to see how it appeared from above. At times, the aerial view easily clarified details of topography that had taken much more effort to ascertain on the ground. However, when flying over landscapes they did not know well, they found the scenes unedifying. Regarding his aerial trip from Rae on Great Slave Lake to Cameron Bay, Douglas wrote, "No doubt if I had passed through the succession of lakes by canoe I would have found an interest in recognizing the different places I had camped, or found particular difficulties. But from a plane the effect of these countless lakes is monotonous."[120]

For Blanchet and Douglas, travel by air seemed to diminish the motions and relations that had preceded it in northern space. "From high above," Blanchet wrote, "you lose the pleasant little things that compensate when on the ground. … It makes the real little things that you know and have been concerned with and valued seem small and unimportant."[121] In prizing such real little things, and in pinning their memories to the ground, these two men displayed an intimate and nostalgic form of imperial sentiment, at once deeply local and particular as well as common to fieldworkers the world over.

Meditating on the exploration of Australia, Paul Carter carefully distinguishes the engagements of imperial administrators and of explorers with unfamiliar landscapes, the latter encountering the land in uncoordinated, unsettling, and deeply personal ways. This essay has demonstrated that viewing northern spaces as "intensely humanized, saturated with local history and meaning" is not a privilege limited only to its inhabitants, as Mary Louise Pratt once thought. But nor should this kind of intimacy be read, as Graham Burnett once read it, as "a point of departure for a history of empire that renounces the imperial point of view."[122] The historical geographies of trace sketched above were neither truer, nor better, nor any less imperial because they were predicated on propinquitous rather than distant encounters with landscapes. Yet such encounters still complicate the predominant historical narrative of sojourners' relations with the interwar northern environment. Such people did not always welcome the lifting of their arduous burden of fieldwork that new networks and technologies

of travel enabled. Rather, fieldworkers like Blanchet and Douglas desired the continuation of prolonged, proximal encounters with northern lands and spaces because, within the context of antimodernism, such experiences were coded as both enjoyable and therapeutic.

The activities of Guy Blanchet and George Douglas helped to forward the modern industrial order, in which Indigenous peoples, animals, and minerals of the north were increasingly displaced. As John Sandlos and Arn Keeling assert in their chapter later in this volume, the large-scale industrial exploitation of minerals in the Northwest Territories between the wars both prompted and enabled the Canadian state to begin consolidating its grasp upon this sparsely populated and tenuously held region. On the eve of the Second World War, people, goods, and information circulated by land, water, and air throughout the north, and between the north and the south, more efficiently than ever before, thanks to networks of communication and transportation smoothed and enhanced through liberal infusions of southern capital. Towns with many of the conveniences of modern life had appeared on the shores of the north's great lakes—Yellowknife on Great Slave, and Port Radium on Great Bear. Yet northerners did not always share in the region's increasing prosperity. The Dene, Inuit, and Métis were often indirectly or directly barred from accessing newly available resources and opportunities, a trend that would only accelerate in the 1940s and 1950s.

Douglas' and Blanchet's ambivalence toward the emergence of this new north is evident in their deliberately intimate, romantic, and nostalgic antimodern fantasies about certain northern landscapes. These produced emotional topographies tethered to significant traces that gestured, in synecdochical fashion, toward deeply personal narratives of time and memory that allowed Douglas and Blanchet to work through their anxieties about the modern world. While their topographies drew upon other activities and histories that had been fashioned on the same northern ground, they also displaced them, repeating that larger colonial gesture on a smaller scale. This is why, as Emilie Cameron has argued, historians need to turn away from the opposition of local and universal in favour of "accounting for the multiple, conflicting 'locals' at play in the production of imperial science" and knowledge in, and about, the Canadian north.[123]

The centrality of distance in knowing and experiencing the later interwar north shrank Douglas' and Blanchet's traces to insignificance. Forgotten was Blanchet's imaginative revival, through glimpses of toy boats

and awls, of the remnants of lives very different to his own, and Douglas' bed of spruce boughs amidst many other tiny signs of humanity on the shores of Great Bear Lake. These small, soft scenes, smells, and dreams, so pointed and so vital to the bearers of these memories, seemed to have no place in a rapidly modernizing north, the progressive industrialization of which ground over and "devalued the social and economic arrangements it replaced" even as it built upon older material and intellectual networks.[124] Neither man was, of course, aware of all the lived nuances of the places in which they were ultimately sojourners rather than residents, and they certainly translated these landscapes through their own memories, hopes, and fears. But living, however temporarily, and travelling on that northern ground gave them the ability to perceive that, even if they did not understand all of the webs of social and material and natural relations that bent and stretched and sometimes broke with the changes that were happening, such things were still deserving of notice, respect, and, increasingly, mourning.

This essay has taken certain of Douglas' and Blanchet's thoughts and practices as symptomatic of larger currents swirling beneath the surface of early twentieth-century North American society, particularly the disillusionment with modernity and subsequent quest for alternative modes of being that was encapsulated in the movement of antimodernism. This interpretation accounts for the strangely contrasting yet simultaneous views that both held on the north. Their desire to regard it as a pristine outpost of the past coincided with a wish to see it become useful and important through the development of its resources. This double vision paralleled the dual purpose of their presence there: while they worked as surveyors and engineers to advance the region's future, they sought pleasure in returning to a natural world from which they drew different kinds of physical and spiritual sustenance unobtainable in their everyday southern Canadian lives. Blanchet's journeys epitomized a martial, masculine strenuousness nourished by an ideal of historical Indigeneity. Douglas sought encounters precisely ordered in space and time that were refreshed by their own immaculately preserved historical antecedents. Increasingly, however, industrialization and modernization intruded upon their fieldwork and leisure alike. These forces pulled them back from the land and the past, and pushed them to contemplate a future in which their values, methods, and indeed, their sensibilities, seemed to have little presence or influence.

## Notes

1 I wish to thank Kathy Hooke, George Douglas' niece, for her warm hospitality and her generous willingness to share her family's historical documents and knowledge, which helped me clarify many aspects of her uncle's life and career. I also wish to thank Janet Blanchet for granting permission to publish photographs from her uncle-in-law's collection, and Gwyneth Hoyle, Guy Blanchet's biographer, for all of her advice and support.

Library and Archives Canada (hereafter cited as LAC), George Mellis Douglas fonds, MG 30 B95, vol. 5, file 7, George Douglas to Jim Douglas, 17 September 1935.

2 Queen's University Archives, George Whalley fonds, Location 1032c, box 2, file 3, Guy Blanchet to George Whalley, 17 January 1963.

3 T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xv.

4 Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914–1967* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 1.

5 Liza Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009).

6 Trevor Lloyd, "Activity in Northwest Canada," *Journal of Geography* 42, no. 5 (1943): 162.

7 Piper, *Industrial Transformation*, 75, 287.

8 Bruce Hevly, "The Heroic Science of Glacier Motion," *Osiris* 11 (1996): 66–86.

9 Stephen Bocking, "A Disciplined Geography: Aviation, Science, and the Cold War in Northern Canada, 1945–1960," *Technology and Culture* 50, no. 2 (2009): 265–90.

10 Antoinette Burton, "Introduction: The Unfinished Business of Colonial Modernities," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities*, ed. Antoinette Burton (London: Routledge, 1999), 1–16; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). "Precarious vulnerability" is Stoler's phrase by way of Burton ("Unfinished Business," 2); see Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's* History of Sexuality *and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 97.

11 William J. Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 66.

12 Virginia Zimmerman, *Excavating Victorians* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 8.

13 Piper, *Industrial Transformation*, 7.

14 Piper, *Industrial Transformation*, 37–38, 283.

15 LAC, RG 88, vol. 362, file 16638, E. Deville to W. G. Mitchell, 15 January 1918.

16 Kim Sawchuk, "Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Standardization of Time," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 158–59.

17 Lears, *No Place of Grace*.

18 James Smithies, "An Antimodern Manqué: Monte Holcroft and *The Deepening Stream*," *New Zealand Journal of History* 40, no. 2 (2006): 171. Significant contributions to the historical study of antimodernism in Canada include Ian McKay's *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) and Sharon Wall's *The Nurture of Nature: Childhood, Antimodernism, and Ontario Summer Camps, 1920–55* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009).

19 Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Rural America* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969).

20 George Altmeyer, "Three Ideas of Nature in Canada, 1893–1914," in *Consuming Canada: Readings in Environmental History*, eds. Chad and Pam Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1995), 99–100.

21 Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 106.

22 Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 20–31, 170–215.

23 Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 159.

24 The classic analysis of the racial ideology of nordicity in Canada is Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 3–26.

25 Jane Nicholas, "Gendering the Jubilee: Gender and Modernity in the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation Celebrations, 1927," *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (2009): 247–74; Janice Cavell, "The Second Frontier: The North in English-Canadian Historical Writing," *Canadian Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (2002): 364–89.

26 John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 11.

27 Dartmouth College, Rauner Special Collections Library (hereafter cited as RSCL), Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Correspondence, 1895–1962, MSS 196, box 80, folder 4, George Douglas to Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 7 April 1954.

28 See George M. Douglas, "Copper Deposits of Arctic Canada," *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press* 118, no. 3 (1924): 85–89; Douglas, "A Summer Journey along the Southeast Shores of Great Slave Lake," *Canadian Mining and Metallurgical Bulletin* 22 (February 1929): 344–60; Blanchet, *Great Slave Lake Area, Northwest Territories* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1926); Blanchet, *Keewatin and Northeastern Mackenzie. A General Survey of the Life, Activities, and Natural Resources of This Section of the Northwest Territories, Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1930).

29 British Columbia Archives (hereafter cited as BCA), Guy Houghton Blanchet fonds, MS 0498, box 3, folder 7, Letters re: Dominion

Explorers Ltd. 1928–29, [26] November 1928. Square brackets indicate an insertion or correction of the date as originally omitted or given in the manuscript journals.

30 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 2, file 1, George Douglas to Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 1 December 1925.

31 LAC, RG 88, vol. 382, file 18265, Blanchet, "Report on the Country North and East of Great Slave Lake." The Barren Lands (also known as the Barrenlands, Barren Grounds, or simply the Barrens) denote the area of subarctic tundra covering what is today western Nunavut and part of the eastern Northwest Territories. Stretching from Great Slave and Great Bear lakes in the west to Hudson Bay in the east, and from the Arctic coast in the north to the Hudson Bay coastal plain in the south, the region is distinguished by low vegetative cover, many small lakes and rivers, and gently rolling terrain speckled with glacial erratics.

32 Lynda Jessup, "Introduction: Antimodernism and Artistic Experience," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, 4.

33 From 1921 to 1924, Blanchet had also supervised the first controlled stadia traverse survey of Great Slave Lake, in which his teams of surveyors corrected many of the errors of previous maps and presented a cartographic result that differed significantly from previous representations.

34 LAC, RG 88, vol. 384, file 18506, Surveyor General to Blanchet, 21 May 1924; LAC, RG 88, vol. 387, file 18707, F. H. Peters to Blanchet, 22 April 1925; LAC, RG 88, vol. 388, file 18822, Peters to Blanchet, 28 April 1926.

35 On masculine culture in America at this time, see E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

36 BCA, MS 0498, box 5, 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, [11] July 1924.

37 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 3, Taltson journal, 28 July–19 August 1925, 16 August 1925.

38 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 5, Dubawnt journal, 1–23 July 1926, 18 July 1926.

39 George M. Douglas, *Lands Forlorn: A Story of an Expedition to Hearne's Coppermine River* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), 194–95; BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 4, Dubawnt journal, 7–30 June 1926, 13 June 1926; Dubawnt journal, 1–23 July 1926, 20 July 1926. The last entry admits difficulty with the top figure: "I sometimes load foolishly. I took about 140 [pounds] over a portage of half a mile and my neck nearly collapsed before I got there."

40 Dubawnt journal, 7–30 June 1926, [16] June 1926.

41 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 2, Taltson journal, 16–26 July 1925, [16] July 1925.

42 Blanchet, "Report on the Country."

43 Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 98, 108, 118, 138.

44 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folders 7–8, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928–29, [27] December 1928, 30 March 1929, May 1929.

45 Dubawnt journal, 1–23 July 1926, 10 July 1926.

46 Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 34, 57.

47 Guy Blanchet, *Search in the North* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960), 172.

48 Dubawnt journal, 1–23 July 1926, 23 July 1926.

49 As Liza Piper notes, the country around the large northern lakes was, in fact, "very well known to and thoroughly explored by the Dene" (*Industrial Transformation*, 40) by the early twentieth century. Both Blanchet and Douglas enjoyed travelling in areas of the north that were less well known or not at all known to southern Canadians. However, given their extensive research before each field season, they were more than usually aware, as fieldworkers went, of what activity had preceded them in those spaces and what records of that work had been made. See, for example, LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 4, file 21, Douglas to C. D. LaNauze, 24 September 1933: "…I think with most pleasure of our first voyage [in the summer of 1932], along the south shore of [Great Bear Lake]. This was mostly unmapped country, and so had all the charm of novelty and the unknown. I say 'unmapped,' Franklin's map, the only one ever made, shows that part of the lake in approximate outline…."

50 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, 29 July 1924; Dubawnt journal, 7–30 June 1926, 26 June 1926.

51 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 8, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928–29, 6 and 7 June 1929; 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, [12] and [26] July 1924.

52 On the phenomenon of "playing Indian" or "going Native," see Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998); Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Sharon Wall, "Totem Poles, Teepees, and Token Traditions: 'Playing Indian' at Ontario Summer Camps, 1920–1955," *Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (2005): 513–44.

53 Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 71.

54 Guy Blanchet, "New Light on Forgotten Trails in the Northwest," *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* 40, no. 4 (1926): 71–72.

55 Blanchet, "New Light on Forgotten Trails," 71.

56 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 1, Taltson journal, 24 June–9 July 1925, 5 July 1925.

57 Taltson journal, 15–26 July 1925, 26 July 1925.

58 Dubawnt journal, 1–23 July 1926, 18 July 1926; BCA, MS 0498, box 9, "The Exploration of the Plateau," in "Beyond the Ranges," unpublished MS.

59 Talston journal, 24 June–9 July 1925, 24 June 1925.

60 Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 44–45, 118, 121–22.

61 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 7, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928–29, 25 and 30 January 1929.

62 Beaulieu belonged to a prominent northern Métis and Dene family whose history, entwined with that of preceding generations of non-Indigenous northern travellers, offers "an alternative view of northern exploration," according to Enid Mallory. See Mallory, *Coppermine: The Far North of George M. Douglas* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1989), 240, and chap. 18 more generally. As a voyageur, Souci's great-grandfather, François Beaulieu I, helped ensure the success of Alexander Mackenzie's late eighteenth-century expeditions to the Arctic and Pacific oceans. His grandfather, François Beaulieu II, had advised John Franklin on travel routes prior to his first overland expedition of 1819–22, and had acted as interpreter and hunter for Franklin at Great Bear Lake during Franklin's second overland expedition of 1825–27. Souci's father, also named Joseph King Beaulieu, had guided the British adventurer Warburton Pike on his travels through the north in the 1890s. Souci had travelled briefly with Pike as a young man, and worked closely with Blanchet during the summers of 1922 and 1923. As pilot of the schooner *Ptarmigan*, and as a fount of local geographical knowledge, he was an essential collaborator in Blanchet's 1922 survey of Great Slave Lake's East Arm. See Gwyneth Hoyle, *The Northern Horizons of Guy Blanchet: Intrepid Surveyor, 1884-1966* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2007), chap. 3. On the Beaulieu family, see Chris Hanks, "François Beaulieu II: The Origins of the Métis in the Far Northwest," in *Selected Papers of Rupert's Land Colloquium 2000*, comp. David G. Malaher (Winnipeg: Centre for Rupert's Land Studies, 2000), 111–26.

63 The following account is drawn from Guy Blanchet, "Exploring with Sousi and Black Basile," *The Beaver*, Outfit 295 (Autumn 1964): 34–41. The only contemporary account of this expedition is Blanchet, "Report on the Country." It says almost nothing of his Indigenous guides, terming them simply "two old men."

64 Guy Blanchet, "Narrative of a Journey to the Source of the Coppermine River," *Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Philadelphia* 24 (1926): 168; BCA, MS 0498, box 10, "Mackenzie and Great Slave Lake Explorations," in "These Fifty Years," unpublished MS.

65 Blanchet, *Great Slave Lake Area*, 35.

66 Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 78.

67 Taltson journal, 24 June–9 July 1925, 4 July 1925.

68 Taltson journal, 28 July–19 August 1925, 28 July 1925.

69 1924 Journal—Great Slave Lake survey, 24 July 1924.

70 That the settlement patterns of the Denesuline had changed since the eighteenth century was, at least, correct. Several factors had combined to draw these people away from their traditional hunting territories on the Barrens to more southerly and forested lands. These included the greater preponderance of both fur-bearers and fur traders in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and the later settlement of treaties with the Canadian government that granted Denesuline families reserves and hunting territories south of the sixtieth

parallel. See James G. E. Smith, "Chipewyan," in *Handbook of North American Indians. Volume 6: Subarctic*, ed. June Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 271–84.

71 BCA, MS 0498, box 16, folder 2, Blanchet, "In the Land of the 'Caribou Eaters': An Exploration into the Country Southeast of Great Slave Lake," pt. 2, *Saturday Night*, n.d.

72 Blanchet, "New Light on Forgotten Trails," 71; Blanchet, "In the Land of the 'Caribou Eaters,'" pts. 1–2.

73 Blanchet, "An Exploration into the Northern Plains North and East of Great Slave Lake, Including the Source of the Coppermine River," *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 38, no. 10 (1924): 186; Blanchet, *Great Slave Lake Area*, 39.

74 Blanchet, "In the Land of the 'Caribou Eaters,'" pt. 1; Blanchet, "New Light on Forgotten Trails," 71.

75 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 7, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928–29, 11 January 1929.

76 Jamie Benidickson, "Paddling for Pleasure: Recreational Canoeing as a Canadian Way of Life," in *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on its Evolution in Canada*, eds. Geoffrey Wall and John S. Marsh (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 329.

77 See Hans Carlson's chapter in this volume for a different and important perspective on the significance of situating personal histories in particular northern places.

78 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 3, file 15, George Douglas to James Douglas, 20 May 1910.

79 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 4, file 4, George Douglas to James Douglas, 26 December 1911.

80 LAC, MG 31 C6, Richard Sterling Finnie fonds, vol. 7, file 3, George Douglas to Richard Finnie, 5 November 1948; LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 4, file 1, George Douglas to Lionel Douglas, 16 March 1930.

81 Sawchuk, "Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Standardization of Time," 161–62. See also Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

82 Douglas, "A Summer Journey," 358.

83 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 4, file 19, George Douglas to Lionel Douglas, 16 March 1932.

84 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 4, file 19, George Douglas to Jim Douglas, 19 March 1932.

85 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 4, file 19, George Douglas to Lionel Douglas, 10 March 1932.

86 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 4, file 22, George Douglas, "Fort Norman, Bear River, Great Bear Lake, Voyage of the ALCYONE, June, July—Memoir with mounted photographs." Although Douglas published neither the technical results of his fieldwork nor personal accounts of his northern trips in the 1930s, he collated several typed and illustrated "memoirs" that describe those summer field seasons.

87 Piper, *Industrial Transformation*, 30.

88 Douglas, "Voyage of the ALCYONE."

89 Douglas, "Voyage of the ALCYONE."

90 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 5, file 6, George Douglas, "Report on Explorations, Athabaska Lake and Great Slave Lake, Summer of 1935."

91 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 5, file 1, George Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane in the Far North, 1928 Slave Lake, 1935 Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake—Memoire with Mounted Photographs" (first draft).

92 Douglas, "Report on Explorations."

93 Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane"; LAC, MG30 B95, vol. 4, file 23, Diary 22 June—14 September 1935, 26 June 1935.

94 Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane."

95 Douglas, "Voyage of the ALCYONE."

96 Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane."

97 Mallory, *Coppermine*, 226.

98 Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane."

99 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 5, file 4, Diary 27 April–6 September 1938, 29 July 1938.

100 LAC, MG 30 B95, vol. 5, file 8, George Douglas, "Our Travels. Season 1938. By Canoe. By Tug and Barge with light canoe. By Plane."

101 Diary 27 April–6 September 1938, 14 June 1938.

102 Diary 22 June–14 September 1935, 24 July 1935; Diary 27 April–6 September 1938, 28 April 1938.

103 See, for example, Diary 22 June–14 September 1935, 16 July 1935.

104 Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 40.

105 Guy Blanchet, "The Caribou of the Barren Grounds," *The Beaver*, Outfit 267 (1936): 25; Guy Blanchet, "Thelewey-aza-yeth," *The Beaver*, Outfit 280 (1949): 8.

106 Marionne Helena Cronin, "Flying the Northern Frontier: The Mackenzie River District and the Emergence of the Canadian Bush Plane, 1929-1937" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2005), 141.

107 Guy Blanchet, "Conquering the Northern Air," *The Beaver*, Outfit 269 (1939): 11.

108 J. R. K. Main, *Voyageurs of the Air: A History of Civil Aviation in Canada, 1858–1967* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), 299.

109 Marionne Cronin, "Northern Visions: Aerial Surveying and the Canadian Mining Industry, 1919–1928," *Technology and Culture* 48, no. 2 (2007): 306.

110 Cronin, "Northern Visions," 310–11, 316–22.

111 Jonathan F. Vance, *High Flight: Aviation and the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2002), 151.

112 Lawrence J. Burpee, "Where Rail and Airway Meet," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 10, no. 5 (1935): 239–45.

113 Piper, *Industrial Transformation*, 73.

114 Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

115 George Douglas to Jim Douglas, 17 September 1935 (emphasis original). However, the utility of combining aerial perspectives on northern landscapes with ground-level reconnaissance soon became plain. In 1942, Douglas opined that the best way to select a route for the nascent Alaska Highway was to walk over the country, make flights, and study aerial photographs before and after

the pedestrian trip. See RSCL, MSS 196, box 80, folder 4, George Douglas to Stefansson, 10 April 1942. A decade later, Western Electric technicians took a near-identical approach to collecting geographic information about the landscapes in which the DEW Line would be situated. See Matthew Farish and P. Whitney Lackenbauer's essay in this volume.

116 LAC, MG 31 C6, vol. 7, file 1, George Douglas to Richard Finnie, 30 November 1942.

117 LAC, MG 31 C6, vol. 6, file 5, P. G. Downes to Richard Finnie, 30 March 1956.

118 Smith, *Moving Lives*, 32. But see also Cronin's chapter in this volume, which demonstrates that travel in an interwar bush plane produced similarly intense physical experiences for its passengers.

119 Blanchet, "Across the Southern Plateau," in "Beyond the Ranges"; Blanchet, "Thelewey-aza-yeth," 9.

120 George Douglas, "By Canoe and Plane." As Cronin's chapter shows, the perspective was quite different from the pilot's seat. To those who flew throughout the north regularly, the view from above revealed familiar environments and personal emotional geographies similarly tethered to specific northern places.

121 BCA, MS 0498, box 3, folder 8, Letters re: Dominion Explorers Ltd. 1928–29, [16] May 1929.

122 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 61; D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 11.

123 Emilie Cameron, "'To Mourn': Emotional Geographies and Natural Histories of the Canadian Arctic," in *Emotion, Place and Culture*, ed. Mick Smith, et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 166–67. Cameron's chapter in this volume also engages with multiple "locals," albeit from a contemporary perspective.

124 Piper, *Industrial Transformation*, 42.